JAINA STORIES

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(As gleaned from canonical texts)

ADHYATMA-YOGI
UPADHYAYA MUNI SRI MAHENDRA KUMARJI 'PRATHAM'

Foreword
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FOREWORD

It is really a very happy news that an English version of 'Jaina Kahaniyan' by Upadhyaya Muni Mahendra Kumarji 'Pratham' is being brought out

The only reason why the Jaina religion and culture and Bhagawan Mahavira have not received as much attention as they deserve is that they have not been presented to the world through the medium of a universally understood language like English It is very heartening to learn that some prestigious publishers such as M/s Motilal Banarsidass have been taking interest for the last few decades in this direction also

Literature in the form of stories is not by itself regarded as Philosophy, Culture and History But as a matter of fact, stories alone have the power to make these subjects easily intelligible to the common people Such a power is rare in any other form of literature

We should be grateful to the persons and institutions engaged in this sacred undertaking, and Muni Manmalji who has inspired them all with his insightful suggestions deserves special mention and compliments

I wish good luck and success to all persons and institutions engaged in this virtuous and benevolent work

Dec 6, 1983 — MUNI NAGRAJ

NEW DELHI

PREFACE

Life with most people is a limited territory in which they fulfil a routine till they go out. They are used to live within this limit and have neither the will nor the capacity to break through its bounds. Completely surrendered to environment and nurtured by it, they have neither the urge nor the ambition to go beyond it and get established in their own authority, so that when at last time comes for them to leave their earthly abode, they do so without virtually leaving any mark behind They are mere tools rather than artisans, mere slaves rather than masters It is a remote chance, a rare possibility, that an event somewhat worthwhile ever takes place in a life like this, which, therefore, remains dull, flat and pedestrian to the core. And in the absence of events, this sort of life does not produce any history. It is just historyless, which is the same thing as saying that the life-story of most men terminates with them.

In contrast, there may be a few others, almost in every age and in every country, who break through the limits of life to attain a wider expanse They live more for others than for themselves. They are the real harbingers of progress The experience of such men contributes to improve the quality of human life, and since there is a succession of such men from age to age, the progress upward of humanity has remained unabated. Such men are the real creators of history, and it is a knowledge of this history that serves as a guide to understanding the progress of human society

Events in the life of such creative men, floating down the current of time, become, at a gap of years and centuries, a sort of tradition, a heritage, a treasure for the community. They inspire the creative writers and get recorded in the literature which, in fact, is a reflection of life. In pro-

ducing literature, the writer weeds out certain things which are unnecessary, adds things from his own imagination, imparts dialogue and creates in the process something which is noble, dignified, enchanting, inspiring, something which is a true replica of life and something which, when heard or read, goes straight to the heart. Short story is one of the literary forms in which the writer expresses himself. Jainism provides a philosophy which is difficult to the extreme and is intelligible to a handful of scholars. To bringit home to the common man, spiritual teachers and scholars in different ages have used the medium of short stories of which there are hundreds, even thousands, scattered throughout the length and breadth of the vast *agamic* literature and their commentaries They have been produced in different ages by men with widely divergent experiences, but all against the backdrop of a common canvas which is Jainism. The analysis of personalities in these stories, the conglomeration of events, the clashes of selfish motives and interests, the display of bravery, the shape of endeavour, the depth of human life, the quagmire of meanness, fear, squalor, impatience, lethargy, imbalance, etc, which undermines the quality of life and places it on a very low pedestal, these and many such things dominate these stories They have been repeated innumerable times to refix the fallen, the misguided, the downtrodden to the right path which is the path of religion, the path meant for a pilgrim, and they are still not devoid of freshness and potentiality.

To be the subject-matter of literature, it is not necessary that the life of men only with a golden tinge is deserving of consideration Even the life of men with dark patches provide an equally worthwhile material for the purpose. These two types of men may stand widely apart, they may so to say be called to belong to entirely different worlds, but that does not prevent them from receiving consideration at the hands of a creative artist. Whenever

life, golden or dark, has some vigour in thinking, some capacity for acting, some message for others, it becomes a worthy material for the literary man's attention. Jaina stories, in fact, depict the life of men with a golden tinge as well as that with dark patches. Men with a golden tinge are inherently good and they are already on the right path as good examples for others. But even men with the deepest patches stand the chance of rehabilitation if they can be brought back to the right path. Then there are cases where a man has slipped from the right path to get wholly lost An account of such men serves as a useful warning. Quite a number of stories uphold the cause of women, the fallen, the downtrodden, the backward sections of the community. Jainism believes in the infinite capacity of the human soul and the core message in Mahavira's *kriyavada* is that man is the architect of his own fortune provided he asserts as a master and remains not submissive as a slave. The soul has no sex or caste and nomatter whether it is encased at a moment in the frame of a woman or a *sudra*, with right exertion, it is liable to attain perfection and liberation

One important theme of many Jaina stories is the ability of many monks to reveal the operation of *karma* effect in the life of man. In doing so, they have thrown light on the previous birth (s) of the questioner Some have even gone to the extent of forecasting the shape of things to come, not like an astrologer, but like a true seer, telling the questioner where his soul will go when it is dislodged from here. Not only monks, according to some short stories, even lay men had their long memory revived at the sight of a familiar personality or scene or at the occurence of some familiar event somuch so that they had their past lives revealed to them and this served as an inspiration to them to quit this mundane life which, in Indian view, is a veritable bondage. Though this type of knowledge is now

virtually lost, like many other good things of the old world, there is no reason why it should be rejected as a myth, since we have at any time present in India as well as outside many cases where an individual has been able to recollect his past life and give dependable evidence in support of it. Though there is hardly any Jaina monk living now who can reveal the past life of any questioner, there are quite a few, including the present author, who have demonstrated on many occasions a long memory through their *avadhana* technique

Quite a number of Jaina stories are fictitious, a creation by some teacher or commentator to drive home a point or a difficult theme or a terse tenet, but quite a vast number deals with the life events of monks, *acharyas*, *sravakas*, *sravikas*, or even people who are known to history, and in so far as this has happened, these stories may serve as a good source material of history A large number of stories are connected with events in the life of Mahavira, and they are highly instructive to the reader The lives of great teachers and monks have always been a source of inspiration to others, and when these have been catered through the medium of short stories, they have reached a much wider and a cross section of the members of the public

When in the course of my own studies of the *Agamas*, I became aquainted with the existence of such a fabulous crop of short stories, I set myself, under the inspiring guidance of my senior colleagues, notably Muni Nagarajji of the Terapanth sect, to the task of bringing this harvest within the reach of the common man. My endeavour was, therefore, directed to the faithful reproduction of these stories in readable Hindi. As I proceeded in my work, new vistas opened in front of me so that by now it has been possible to print 27 parts in Hindi and many more parts will follow in years to come. I was encouraged by the reception given to my labour and this made me think of

bringing out the same stories immediately through the English medium to reach a much wider section of the public in India and outside. The English version of Jaina short stories produced by Prof. K. C. Lalwani is now going out for the first time, and it is expected that the book-lovers irrespective of caste or creed will derive ample benefit and pleasure from it.

Before I conclude this brief preface, I must add a personal note which I am keen to share with the earnest reader The vast world of Jaina stories gave me an acquaintance with human character which I saw corroborated through my own experiences during the past two years or so when I passed through many trying situations, trials and tribulations, ignominy and hardship But no hardship lasts for ever As a good experience may be followed by a bad one, all due to the operation of *karma*, so a bad experience is itself followed by a good one This is the eternal order If one is securely rooted in his base, nothing can throw him out from his position, and as the dark days recede, one is able to see the ray of light again This is a great lesson I have myself derived from life, and this is a lesson which I bequeath to my dear readers through this vast world of Jaina stories

Muni Mahendrakumar 'Pratham'

INTRODUCTION

Short stories have been used as a convenient medium for educating the people in religious tenets, moral principles and ethical norms For this purpose, every country has its own fables, legends, short stories and the like and these together, poetry apart, constitute one of the early literary forms which human mind had devised and used From Greece, we have the well-known *Aesop's Fables*. In this country, we have innumerable Pauranic legends and an equally large number of stories such as those contained in the *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesa*, etc So goes the story that a Brahmin named Vishnu Sharma produced the five principles of state-craft in story form to impart lessons to the sons of his patron and king who were totally averse to education and would take to no sane advice or discipline Besides these, every country has its legends, like the legends of Greece and Rome, of Persia, of India and of China And then there are the folk tales some of which, like De's *Folk Tales of Bengal*, have been collected and put into print, while others are in currency as words of mouth Because of its infinite efficacy and popularity, this form of literature has become a precious cultural treasure with all ancient peoples surviving to this day and continues to inspire people from generation to generation

The Jaina *Agamic* texts are a complex affair, apart from being vast To make then intelligible, the authors have included many illustrations, even stories, which are now a part of the Sramana cultural tradition. Some of these texts, notably the *Vipaka Sutra*, which itself is the 11th principal text (*anga*), are wholly in story form, and in this particular *Sutra* ten stories illustrate the pleasant experiences of life and another ten the unpleasant experi-

ences of life, each bunch explaining the operation of pious and impious *karma* respectively. Following the compilation of the principal texts, generations of teachers and commentators have added illustrations of their own to inspire the people to the faith and to pin them to right conduct. Altogether, the Jaina story literature is a vast store-house of knowledge.

The Jaina short stories are a type by themselves and, strictly speaking, they may not be comparable with legends, fables and folk tales from other cultures and countries wherein the objective does not, by and large, extend beyond enunciating an ethical norm or social behaviour In contrast, most of the Jaina stories, unless they are historical episodes or personal accounts, have a clearly religious purpose which is to turn people from domestic life to the monastic order and ultimately to literation As an illustration, all stories contained in the *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* have this bias They are, therefore, not very useful for children but pressume a certain degree of maturity in the reader

A very important common element in many Jaina stories is the illustration of *karma* effect *Karma* pursues all souls, from human till those of the most invisible insects and bacteria, through various existences, and this process is going on from an eternal past and will continue through an eternal future. In the case of the human soul, however, the difference is that this soul not only experiences, but is fully conscious of *karma* effect It knows pretty well, since it is a part of the cultural heritage, that *karma* is the determinant of which the human life is a determined product. *Karma* is not mere action, but a very subtle matter which is always affixed on the space-points of the soul, imparting in the process some weight to it, so that the soul becomes incapable to rise to the crest of the sphere

(*loka*) which is liberation. *Karma* takes the soul through the cycle of birth and death, and birth again. When a bad *karma* fructifies, a human soul suffers untold misery; when a good *karma* fructifies, it has pleasant experience, wealth, prosperity, power and fame As one *karma* is exhausted through fructification, others are rushing in all the time, so that there is at no time a vacuum In fact, not a single *karma* lasts for ever For there's nothing permanent in the natural order Bright day dawns as a bad *karma* is exhausted through fructification, making room for a softer one Given right endeavour, a human soul can earn its own liberation from the clutches of *karma*

Some stories tend to illustrate the efficacy of *namokara* which is simultaneously a form of obeisance and a *mantra* to be repeated on the beads A hero or a heroine in a story utters the *namokara* under a difficult situation and is at once protected by the 'five well-wishers' It is a matter of faith of the believer. Some stories illustrate the efficacy of observing the vows, five by the monks, viz non-violence, non-lie, non-theft, non-accumulation and non-sex, and the same five for the followers, *albeit* in a less rigorous form, plus seven more to supplement for the latter It has been demonstrated in many stories how by sincerely observing the vows, many have been liberated in the past or at least improved the quality of their life, the moral being that many more may still do the same provided they sincerely observe them. Some stories illustrate the outcome when a monk or a follower slips from the right path due to non-observance of vows, which serves as a severe warning

A careful perusal of these stories gives an idea of the social, political, economic and cultural conditions of the time in which they were written. Kings were the heads of the state and they had ministers to aid and advise them in running the administration. *Sresthis* or merchants constituted the most affluent section of the society. They had

extensive trade connections not only within their own state and region, but also with other states and regions, sometimes very far off. Quite a number of them were sea-faring. We have the names of many important ports which were then in use Some of these merchants had more wealth than what was contained in the king's treasury. Apart from usual professions and crafts, dream interpretation appears to have been an important profession which claimed many people. Prostitution was another important institution. People coming from outside, notably merchants, halted outside the city walls, giving the idea of an extensive suburb which was separated from the city by a wall. Monks used to camp outside the city, mostly in structures dedicated to the *yaksas*. *Vidyadharas* were a species of human beings who were in possession of some special *vidyas* or powers, particularly flying There were other powers which some people possessed, e g, power to transform oneself into any form, power to understand the language of animals, etc, etc Quite a number of stories throw light on administration, law and order, justice, crime and punishment etc, and many of them make use of supernatural elements or are delineated in a medieval setting or mythological language which may not appeal much to a modern mind. In many cases, the same type of incident is repeated in more than one story which may be detested by a reader who is seeking fresh things all the time. But this has been done for the sake of emphasis, and is not wholly redundant.

In almost all the stories, renunciation has been upheld as the most laudable means for attaining the ideal of life. This is in a sense connected with the idea of the transmigration of the soul which is widely accepted in all the Indian systems. This life has been viewed as a microscopic fraction of an eternal life, no bigger than a step from the past into the future. And if this step is to be a worthy one, then one must improve the quality of life

liberated pretty early in age. But for most people, kings or common-folks, monkhood is shown to have invariably come in old age, making it somewhat similar to modern superannuation. People have been inspired to monkhood when in advanced age they had realised the futility of domestic life any more or by simply listening the inspiring sermon of some monk or spiritual leader.

Closely linked up with the idea of transmigration of the soul is the idea of *jati-smaran* or remembering one's past life in which a person has his past life revealed by a monk or in which the revelation comes itself on witnessing a familiar scene or expriencing a familiar event. Whatever the methodology, this gives one the memory of the past life, which in turn lends support to the idea of the transmigration of the soul. The revival of the memory of the past life has been invariably followed by renunciation by the person concerned who goes forth to attain the higher ideals of life. Wherein the past life is revealed by a monk, in some cases, he has thrown light on the life hereafter. It is on record that on a question by no less a person than King Srenika Bimbisara of Magadha, Mahavira revealed that he was destined to go to hell and that this was irrevocable. On a further question, Mahavira said that Bimbisara was going to be the first *tirthankara* of the next bracing phase of the time-cycle on completion of his life in hell. All this must be very interesting to the reader.

Practically all stories lend support to Mahavira's *kriyavada* in some way or other. In a nutshell, *kriyavada* means actionism, which further means that man is the architect of his own future, and that there is no power in heaven, earth or the nether world which can either help or hinder a determined man. Two supporting pillars are knowledge and action, and Mahavira is said to have observed, *jnana-kriyabhyam moksa*. Actionism has no room for divine grace on the one hand, and, on the other, it

strikes at the very root of determinism or fatalism, which was the philosophy propounded by some powerful adversaries of Mahavira. To build up one's own future, one needs undergo right exertion or endeavour under proper guidance. Misdirected energy or hardship yields no result. It is a pity that a sense of cynicism prevails in the present-day Jaina monastic order according to which liberation is no longer possible in the present age partly because the span of human life has become short and partly because man's capacity to bear hardship has gone down Such a view is not only wrong, but it strikes at the very root of *kriyavada* Man was never more powerful than in the present age, and given earnest endeavour, he is sure to be liberated even now In so far as this point is upheld in many a story, their scope becomes as much extensive as that of Jaina philosophy and religion

Quite a large number of stories are connected with events in the life of Mahavira and they are, therefore, useful in constructing the life story of this great teacher. Many others give account of the life of innumerable monks and church leaders We come across the names of a large number of rulers, kings, ministers, *sresthis* who have had a place in history Not only stories but the whole gamut of Sramana literature has useful material for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history, which, as it stands at present, is lopsided and unbalanced because of its exclusive reliance on the Indo-Aryan sources, to the total exclusion of Sramana sources Some lesser known Jaina scholars have made a juvenile attempt at this reconstruction, but it has yet to gain a wider acceptance We get also some glimpses of the history of the Jaina church through some of these stories. For instance, we have the story of Kesi-Gautama in the *Uttaradhyayana*, being respectively the stalwarts of the church of Parsva and that of Mahavira. After a frank discussion between the two, Kesi and his

followers took shelter in the church of Mahavira. It is thus certain that the Jaina church became united at the time of Mahavira

Many more things could have been written about these short stories, but I am afraid, a foreword to a book is not an appropriate place for this. So long, this vast storehouse remained confined to Prakrit and Sanskrit so that it was not available to the common man Sparingly, it was used by a monk or a nun to illustrate a point here and there, but its wide use was not possible. About a quarter century back, it occured to some people that this material should be presented through the medium of modern Indian languages, notably Hindi, which the vast majority of the Jainas understand But who was to do this? For, while some of the Jaina monks were well-read in Prakrit and Sanskrit, their proficiency in Hindi was not high, while the usual Hindi story writers were not acquainted with this field in Prakrit or Sanskrit which they did not know At this stage, Muni Mahendrakumarji Pratham stepped in to present a large number of Jaina stories ***verbatim*** in plain Hindi Ten parts of these stories as retold by him appeared in print, about 100 pages or more in each part in double crown size, by 1961, and another 15 by 1971, so that the Muni has about 3,000 pages in print to his credit Provided his indifferent health permits, he desires to raise it to 10,000 pages which, he is sure enough, is a pretty easy job Since the Muni's works have been published, but quite independently of him, one or two writers have retold some Jaina stories through the medium of Hindi and Bengali by making use of modern technique of story writing, and making them more readable in the process, but the Muni's work remains to this date the most massive

It was in 1969 that I was approached with a request to translate the stories into English. I was reluctant

partly because my hands were already full with no less worthwhile things, and partly because I have no taste for literary production or reproduction But ultimately I had to accept the job which I completed by 1972, putting it mostly through my hours of odd jobs like rail travel or hours of relaxation. Although I have never felt very happy about the form in which they have been presented in Hindi, I have myself not dared to change it in my English rendering.

K C Lalwani

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AMVADA

[a tale of heroism and magic-powers]

In the city of Srivasa, there reigned a king name Vikram Singha One day, as the king was seated in his full court, there came a stranger The king asked him who he was and what was the purpose of his visit. Without replying to the kirg's enquiry, the stranger made the following observation :

"There lies a treasure, sir, beneath the meditation ground of Gorakh Yogini."

The king startled at these words Said he,

"What do you know about it ? Where was it obtained from ?"

Revealing his own identity, the stranger said,

"My name is Kurvaka. I am the son of the very famous hero Amvada. You must be familiar with the stories of his adventure, bravery and magnanimity You must also be knowing how far-flung was his vast empire But, oh king and gentlemen of the court, you are not likely to know all his background It is full of mighty events. He started as an ordinary man with hardly any wealth which he could call his own. He tried his best to build up a fortune but he was wholly unsuccessful at that."

"But then. oh prince, how did he become a great king with so much wealth and splendour ?" asked everybody.

"Well, gentlemen, I am here to throw light on that Please listen with full attention to what I say. As I have already mentioned, Amvada started as a pauper and he left

no stone unturned to become a rich man Once in the course of his wanderings, he reached Dhanagiri, where he met Gorakh Yogini and propitiated her When she was pleased with his propitiation, he said, 'Endow me with such power as I may do anything I please' The Yogini said, 'What's it that pleases you?' My father submitted, 'I crave for wealth.' The Yogini retorted at once, 'Wealth cann't be acquired without bravery, wit and strength' To this my father said, 'Holy Mother! Whatever you will ask me to do, I shall do. By your grace, I shall not retreat from any venture'. At these words, the Yogini was pleased with him. Said she, 'If you can fulfil my seven orders, you will attain unexpected success' My father agreed "

ORDER ONE

'Fetch me the fruits of Satasarkara tree'

"In the course of conversation," the prince continued, 'the Yogini had measured my father's sincerity Her first order to him was : 'As you proceed in the eastern direction from this place there s a park named Gunavadana. There you will see a tree named Satasarkara Fetch me the fruits of that tree

'Although he had no idea about the tree or the fruit, mounted on ambition, Amvada started at once and travelled the whole night In the morning, he reached a tank named Kumkum-mandala He rested there for some time and then looked around There he saw a strange sight—men drawing water in jars on their heads and women riding on horse back He could no longer check himself Finding a man near him, he asked about the reason of this reverse behaviour The man said at once, 'Ssh ! Hold your tongue. If it reaches the ear of a lady, we shall be nowhere.' 'But why this much fear of womenfolk ?' said Amvada

"An old lady heard these words. As she was about to say something, a royal procession came near and everybody's attention was placed thither Amvada saw to his utmost surprise a lady seated on a golden throne on the back of an elephant, with a costly canopy above her head, with attendant-ladies gently fanning her with the tail hairs of the *chamari* cow, and the lady herself, a very embodiment of arrogance and rudeness, slighting at everything in the opposite (male) sex. She held a golden rod in her hands which was

shining. She had a large retinue of female attendants preceding and following her elephant When the procession had passed, the old lady said, 'Are you Amvada Kshatriya ? I knew of your arrival for a very long time. Come with me to my house and I shall give reply to your query '

"Amvada gathered courage and reached the lady's residence. It was a huge mansion full of unimaginable wealth As he reached the courtyard, he saw a young lady, the very embodiment of beauty and grace, the like of which he had never seen before The lady was playing with balls, as many as four at a time, none touching the ground even once And they were no ordinary balls, but the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon and two planets, and as they were hurled into the sky, they displayed, respectively, rays, beams and dark shadows which were visible from the ground Amvada was surprised all the more and he had now many more queries to ask But before he could open his lips, the old lady said to him, 'Amvada ! You are on your way to fetch the fruits of the *satasarkara* tree at the bidding of Gorakh Yogini ; is that right ? Till you get'em, you are free to have a nice time with my daughter Chandravati '

"This increased Amvada's confusion all the more He knew not what to make of it Suddenly, Chandravati turned to him and said, 'Don't you worry I'm looking for a playmate like you You're welcome For this game, the only rule is that the ball touches not the ground If it does, you are defeated, and the defeated party rubs the feet of the victor ' Amvada agreed The lady displayed unusual skill of her hands and the balls didn't touch the ground even once Now, it was Amvada's turn and the lady extended towards him all the four exceptional balls Amvada picked up the sun first, but he was so much scorched by its rays that he fell down unconscious Chandravati then hurled the sun in the sky, and with him, her playmate too, and she fixed the sun in the sky

There he saw a strange sight.

"When the sun's chariot-driver Nagada came near the solar region, he took pity on the poor man. He stared at the moon to get some nectar to restore the man to life, but the moon was nowhere to be seen When he saw the moon's consort Rohini, she revealed that the moon was still with Chandravati and that she herself was feeling bitterly the pangs of separation. Nagada consoled the lady assuring her to get the release of the moon at once and started in search of Chandravati

"When Chandravati saw Nagada coming towards her, she hurled a loop at him, and the fellow was tied hand and foot and dropped down Chandravati went away minding her own business When Nagada's sister Sarpadansta-srinkhala came to know of her brother's plight, she hurried to his rescue She soon liberated her brother Once free, Nagada now rushed towards Chandravati with renewed fury The lady at once asked the sun to stop his driver, which the sun did He further asked Nagada not to bear animosity towards the lady who was a great *yogini* herself and was capable of even overpowering him at times

"At the sun's bidding, Nagada withdrew. He now acquired some magical powers with which he first killed the old lady Bhadravati. This reduced the power of the daughter who now begged to be forgiven. She was then made to release the sun and the moon Rohini was happy now to see her husband back. Nagada then took some nectar from her, came at once where lay Amvada and sprinkled a few drops on him Restored to consciousness, Amvada at once bowed before the sun, who became pleased with him and gave him a boon The sun made him proof against women's coquetry

"Amvada was amazed to receive this unexpected boon from the sun He expressed his gratitude to the sun, who,

in turn, gave him two more powers, one equipping him with power to fly and the other with power to cast a net of hypnotism wherever he liked. At the sun's bidding, Nagada fetched the fruits of the *satasarkara* tree and gave them to Amvada. He also helped his restoration to the ground.

"Amvada now thought of teaching a lesson to Chandravati who had caused him so much trouble. So he appeared before her in the guise of Mahadeva. The lady felt profoundly obliged to see the great Lord in her house and fell at his feet. Just then the Lord started weeping in a pitiable tone and the lady felt surprised at the Lord's affliction. The Lord informed her about the loss of his dear wife Parvati which, he said, was the cause of his present distress. Chandravati offered to do anything for him At this, the Lord asked her to take the place of his departed wife The lady was surprised at this unusual request She was an ordinary human being How could she be the consort of the divine? But she was afraid to disoblige the Lord So she gave her consent.

"Mahadeva told her that he was a very careless type of god who depended on the poorest food, dress and vehicle, and as his consort the lady too would be expected to lead a similar life She was to tonsure her head, put on rags and a coat of black soot on her face and follow him on the back of a donkey. It was agreed that the Lord would come at noon to take the lady with him

"The news of the arrival of Mahadeva soon spread round the town and hundreds flocked to witness this curious event At the right moment, Mahadeva appeared It was now time for the lady to start in the company of her husband. Just at that moment, Amvada withdrew his magic and stood before everybody in his own form. It was a severe joke for the lady who took it bitterly, but it became the source of great fun for the people who had assembled to witness the event.

Amvada informed the lady that the sun was now on his side. He challenged her afresh to the game of balls. There were sharp exchanges between the two after which the game started, and, as was expected, the lady suffered defeat. Amvada, however, did her the favour of taking her as his wife. This was no small gain for him, since Chandravati was no ordinary lady but a great *yogini* herself, from whom Amvada acquired four magical powers, viz, flying in the air (*akasagamini*), pursuing another's thought (*chintita-gamini*), changing one's guise (*svarupaparavartini*) and casting a spell of attraction (*akarsini*).

"Now, in the company of his wife, Chandravati, Amvada returned. Soon he was in the presence of Gorakh Yogini, at whose feet he placed, to the great joy of the powerful lady, the fruits of the *satasarkara* tree.

"Thus Amvada fulfilled the first order."

ORDER TWO

'Fetch me Andharika from the Isle of Harichbhatra'

"Gorakh Yogini now ordered Amvada to fetch her Andharika, the daughter of a *yogi* named Kamalakanchana who lived in the Isle of Harichbhatra in the south seas

"Amvada started in that direction through the sky and soon landed in a park on the island He was then thinking how to find the *yogi* out Just then, a man coming in that direction addressed him by name Amvada was surprised, but his surprise increased when he was told that the man was the *yogi* himself, whom he was looking for When Amvada reached his cottage, he saw the girl Andharika for whom he had come all the way The girl was sobbing When her father enquired about the cause of her distress, she said, 'Father, this man in your company is a rogue He has come here to carry me away' The father consoled the poor girl: 'None can take you so long as I am here' Then taking Amvada outside the cottage, the *yogi* said, 'Are you coming from Gorakh Yogini' 'ya', replied Amvada

"The *yogi* had two wives, Kagi and Nagi, who were living in a different house some way off Amvada was sent to them with an escort. They received him and offered him good food Then as he lay to take rest, the ladies changed him into a cock, themselves turned into two cats, and started teasing the cock The cock felt highly distressed against two adversaries Just then, the *yogi* returned and, addressing the cock, he said, 'You have come, oh rogue, to rob us of our daughter You're rightly served'

"For many days, Amvada remained in that state, after which the *yogi* requested his wives one day to drive the cock out into the forest This was immediately done. The cock was now at least free from the two cats and had a nice time in the forest One day, it felt thirsty and drank water from a tank. As soon as he had done it, the spell was gone, and Amvada was his own self again

"One day, while roaming in the forest, he heard a woman crying. Moving in that direction, he saw a lady in distress On being asked by Amvada, the lady gave the following account about herself :

" 'I am the daughter of King Hansa of Rolagpur My name is Rajhansi When I reached my youth, my father invited Prince Harishchandra to receive me as his wife Every thing was moving according to the schedule Only the last ritual remained to be performed and I was sent for I came in my best of dresses, which, among others contained a blouse from the sun. Suddenly, out of greed for that exceptional blouse, there came a rogue and picked me up to the sky He applied full force to get the blouse from me but he failed. So he dropped me in this forest and disappeared I am now helpless, and even the memory of the incident still haunts me and causes me the greatest of agony I do not know, the rogue may appear at any moment and make me still more miserable '

" 'But, fair lady, tell me first how did you get the blouse from the sun '

" 'Well, I had my training under the savant lady Saraswati I used to stay with her along with seven other girls from noble families. One night, at very late hours, when all of us were supposed to be fast asleep, the savant lady invoked the 64 *yoginis* and sought from them the fructification of her own learning They agreed to help her in

'Amvada! You have come to this forest after a long time'

exchange for suitable human offerings. The lady then pointed to us and promised them to sacrifice us for their propitiation on the next auspicious day

" 'Sir, I got frightened and apprised my fellow students with the situation. I suggested that the matter must at once be reported to the king, and, on our own part, we must be forearmed with solar power by propitiating the sun-god, so that we would at least not readily succumb but put up a resistance and save ourselves. When my friends approved my proposal, we went to the king He offered to move at once, but I pursuaded him to go slow, and meet the situation with great tact When I revealed my own plans, the king approved

" 'We started, sir, propitiating the sun-god from that day and were soon successful The god bestowed on me this magic blouse and on my seven friends seven lozenges. At the appointed hour, I was advised to put on the blouse, and my friends were to put a lozenge each in her mouth, and, we were assured by the sun-god, that would be enough not only to baffle the wicked lady in her evil designs, but even to put an end to her earthly life

" 'The savant lady didn't have even an inkling of suspicion about our solar power acquired of late. Days passed. One day, the lady told us about an imminent danger to ourselves, to avert which she not only offered to help us, but advised us to be in her room at midday on sunday when, she promised, she would do the needful to protect us. On the appointed day, we all assembled in her room, fully prepared for any eventuality The lady drew eight circles on the ground and seated one of us in each. Then a very elaborate ritual was instituted, at the end of which the lady went to another room to have a change of *sari* given to her by the 63 *yoginis* I took this opportunity to put on the louse, and my friends placed a lozenge each in their mouth

As the lady now returned, eight of us jumped on her and took out the *sari* from her body. The lady at once lay dead on the ground. Sir, that magic blouse is still with me'

"Amvada now assured the lady of his full protection and convinced her of his great ability to do so. This was not only a great solace for the lady but also an opportunity for her to court a right mate. She made the proposal and Amvada accepted it. They were now leading a veay happy life in the company of each other.

"One day, it so happened that the lady had taken the fruits of an unknown tree and changed into an ass The ass came to Amvada braying He at once arranged to fetch water from the tank that had once restored him to his own form and sprinkled it. The lady was all right very soon The lady then pointed out the tree whose fruits were so powerful to effect the metamorphosis, and saw herself the tank whose water had restored her to her own form Amvada now enquired of the *sari* but the lady informed him that it was still at her parental home at Rolagpur

"As it was necessary to recover the *sari* from that place, the two started for Rolagpur through the sky and were soon in the city park. The king and the queen were happy to see their missing daughter return, and, on being informed by her, they came to the park to receive their daughter's man Amvada was brought to the palace in a grand procession, and the marriage was duly solemnised. Not only was the princess given to him, but seven of her most intimate playmates. To mark the occasion, the king gave half the kingdom to his son-in-law, and henceforth ordinary man Amvada charged into King Amvada.

"The eight wives were sent to his home city, but Amvada moved out himself for the Isle of Harichhatra, since he was yet

to pick up and carry away the *yogi's* girl, Andharika, and to teach the family a good lesson He took the sky route and was on the island. Then dressed like the *yogi* himself, he reached the house, tendered several fruitsfrom the wonderful tree to the two ladies Kagi and Nagi, and asked them to prepare a delicious curry out of them As the ladies got busy in the kitchen, Amvada now dressed as Kagi saw the *yogi* in his cottage and invited him to taste a wonderful curry at once. The *yogi* went home. Andharika was now alone, and it was no difficult job for Amvada to carry her away The girl shouted bitterly for some time, but what more could she do now ? Amvada proceeded straight to Gorakh Yoginis and entrusted the girl to her

"Thus Amvada fulfilled the second order of the Yogini."

ORDER THREE

'Fetch me the gem necklace

"Gorakh, Yogini now ordered Amvada to fetch her a gem necklace from the iron safe of King Somachandra of the Isle of Singhala

"Equipped with prowess, goodluck and ambition, Amvada started for the Isle of Singhala He reached a park there and started devising plans to enter into the palace. Suddenly his eyes fell on a lady who carried a fully blossomed garden on her head Seeing an exceptional lady, Amvada took her to be Princess Chandrayasa herself So he addressed her by the name The lady turned at once and said, 'Sir, I am not the princess, but her playmate Rajaldevi. My father Birochan is the chief minister here But you seem to be a stranger' In any case, Amvada wanted to put the lady to his use. Said he, 'Fair lady ! If you excuse my inquisitiveness, what's that garden-like umbrella on your head ?' At this, the lady gave the following account :

" 'Sir, once I had come to the park in the company of the princess, when both of us got frightened at the sight of an old lady. But the lady moved to us and enquired where we were going I offered myself to be at her service At this, the old lady was highly pleased and suggested that if we so desired, she could arrange for us an interview with Mahadeva, the great god of destruction. I told the lady that the Lord must be far off and that it would be no easy matter for us to appear in his presence At this, the lady informed us that she was the Lord's maid, that the Lord was at that moment at the headquarters, the Kailasa mountain, in the

company of his consot, Parvati, and that if we so desired she could arrange to take us there. We agreed and soon we were on the top of the Kailasa mountain, and then in the presence of the Lord and the Lady. But we had our own doubts if it was a magic or reality, which was soon dispelled by our guide. The Lady then formally introduced us to the Lord and the Lady. They were pleased The Lord then placed a necklace on the princess' neck and bestowed a tortoise-headed rod on me We were told that the necklace was capable of making the wearer to appear in any guise he or she liked, and that the rod wasa sure protection against all enemies and ailments

" 'But, sir, we were not appeased with these gifts, and I prayed for something that would everyday take us to the presence of the Lord. This request pleased the Lord immmensely, and he pointed to a herb named *tridanda* bidding us to take some of it This, we were told, would help to carry us to the presence of the Lord whenever we would so like. We bowed again, and the old lady helped us to be restored to our earthly home We planted the herb in our courtyard, and everyday we pulled it out to appear in the presence of the Lord and everyday we planted it back '

"But Amvada's query about the garden was not yet answered So the lady had to start again. As we used to go to the Kailas everyday, the sun-god observed us One day, he could not check the curiosity and asked who we were and where did we go so regularly. When we gave gave him the full account, he was pleased at our devotion to the Lord. It is he, sir, who was gracious enough to bestow on the princess a costly ornament and on me this lovely garden. The ornament is so full of lustre that it wipes out all darkness We worship the Lord everyday and spend our time in great happiness."

The lady carried a fully blossomed garden on her head

"Amvada now enteredthe city. He had to get the gem necklace from the king's safe He now reached the crowded part of the city and installed himself on the pavement as a player of a musical instrument He took no time to attract a crowd around himself Everybody admired his wonderful performance. Gradually, the solo music changed into a full way-side open-air opera which was thrown open for participation by the members of the public. The whole city flocked there by and by, and even Princess Chandrayasa and her friend Rajaldevi didn't fail to turn up. Rajaldevi soon joined the artists to the great surprise of the princess and disgust of her own parents A lady of a noble family was not expected to dance in public The princess tried to dissuade her but failed At last, Rajal's father, the minister, reported the matter to the king. 'Sire, This seems to be a rogue. He has enticed our girl Something should be done at once' When the king heard this, he was very much surprised He himself appeared on the scene.

"Music, poetry and dance are enchanting in themselves, and above all their skilled presentation People were deeply absorbed The presence of the king added dignity to the whole show Amvada raised his art to the highest pitch, and at the point of climax, he brought its abrupt termination, The king too was highly pleased and was keen to bestow gifts on the organiser and leader of the opera, but Amvada humbly declined. That day, the only topic of the town was the grand performance at the way-side opera

"In the afternoon, when Rajaldevi met her friend, the princess made enquiries about the principal actor for whom she had danced in the morning. She reported about the man asfar as she herself knew, adding in the end that she was intent on marrying with him. Now, the princess herself started changing her opinion about the man, and expressed a desire to her friend to receive him in her own

chamber that very night, if she could arrange such a meeting Rajaldevi consented to convey the princess' desire to the man.

"At midnight, Amada was with the princess in her chamber They talked with great intimacy But an intelligent man never places his cards before another. Amvada too didn't. While taking leave, he gave her a duly prepared betel leaf for her chewing

"This contained the powder of the wonderful fruit, and in the morning everybody saw a donkey moving in the princess' chamber There was no trace of the princess The matter was reported to the king and it spread like wildfire all over the city. Everybody was unhappy Great physicians were called in, but they could do nothing Then an announcement went round promising a huge cash reward to whosoever restored the princess It was repeated a second time, with a promised award of half the kingdom

"Amvada now changed himself into a *yogi* and responded to it He was brought to the princess' chamber where he propitiated the goddess for three days On the fourth day, the princess was restored to her normal shape All were now unanimous that this was a very uncommon *yogi* The king gave him a share in his realm and of course the hands of the princess Needless to add, Rajaldevi too married him. It was not difficult for Amvada now to get the necklace With the coveted staff, he proceeded straight to Gorakh Yogini and placed it at her feet

"Thus Amvada fulfilled the third order."

ORDER FOUR

'Fetch me the Goddess of Wealth and the monkey'

"Now, Gorakh Yogini ordered Amvada to fetch her the Goddess of Wealth and the monkey from the house of a seafaring merchant in the city of Navalaksa.

"Amvada started In the way, he saw a beautiful park named Sugandha where spring reigned throughout the year. The king stood enjoying its everlasting beauty. Suddenly, he saw a beautiful maiden emerging out of a *bakula* tree. He at once started pursuing her, but before he could reach near her, at the pace of a lightning, she walked through a tank and soon disappeared Amvada could find no trace of her.

"The truly ambitious do not sit at rest till the realisation of their ambition Amvada didn't move away from the *bakula* tree. A few days passed One day, a stranger came to him with the offer of a fruit, and invited him to meet a lady The stranger then gave the following account about the lady's back ground.

'In the city of Agnikundapura, there reigned a king named Devaditya He had several queens and many children. One day, one of the queens invited the king to dinner. The lady had very evil designs, and, dinner over, she uttered a a few enchanted words and changed the king into a parrot. The news of the king's misfortune soon spread all over the town, and everybody felt very unhappy, since Devaditya happened to be a popular ruler. But what could be done

now ? The wicked queen was sent into exile and the first queen Lilavati took charge of the parrot.

'Although all arrangements were made to make the parrot's life comfortable, this could impart no ease to the king in the form of a bird. One day, the bird expressed a desire to court self-immolation by entering into fire rather than live in an animal form, but, as chance would have it, Acharya Kulachandra arrived in the city just at that time. At the request of all, he took the case in his own hands, assuring everybody that he would restore the king to his original form within the next few days. The Acharya took no more than a week to achieve this miracle. The king, already disenchanted of the mundane life, was now determined to give it up. He abdicated in favour of his son, and followed in the footsteps of the holy man. The queen too joined the holy order of the nuns

'Within a few months after her initiation, the queen, now a nun, was about to give birth to a child The king, now a monk, was shocked, since this would defile them both in public eyes The queen humbly said that she was already pregnant at the time of her initiation, but she suppressed it then, lest this should delay her joining the holy order. The queen-nun gave birth to a daughter and died soon thereafter. The king-monk had now to mother the poor girl. That girl is Amaravati whom you saw

'Sir, believe me, the girl is the very embodiment of grace and beauty. One day, as she was roaming in the forest, the God of Wealth, who was flying overhead, was attracted by her grace. He came down to her and made an offer of three exceptional gems, one of which is capable of preventing the turbulence of the sea, another the turbulence of the wind, and the third one is capable of protecting against all evil spirits. Extremely intelligent as she is, she accepted the

A giant fish swallowed up Amvada

offer with thanks, but as to the proposal regarding their marriage, she skilfully sidetracked it by saying that there should be a fraternal tie between the two What could the god do but to accept her request ? The sister now requested her brother to equip her with powers that would make her invincible in all situations To oblige her, the god at once created a vast lake and a costly mansion therein for her stay When the king-monk enquired about his daughter's future, the god told him that she would be married to Amvada, the man of ambition, and that the girl would herself find him out'

"Amvada felt highly elated at the account given by the stranger An invitation from such an exceptional lady, who was marked for him, to see her at her own residence ! Amvada reached her mansion and was with the lady herself. It was indeed a happy meeting Now Amvada was anxious to meet the king-monk and he started at once At her bidding, a valet accompanied him, leading him through the tank and the forest Amvada walked behind him But no sooner had the two covered a short distance than a giant fish swallowed up Amvada The fish, in turn, was picked up by a crane who held it in its beak. In this state, the crane was picked up by a hawk who flew away in the sky When the valet turned back to check if Amvada was following, he didn't see him there, and no clue to his disappearance could he find He came back and reported the matter to the girl She was very sorry but didn't know what to do in the situation

"Being tired of the weight it was carrying, the hawk sat on a tree A hunter saw the hawk and hit it with an arrow As the hawk dropped down, the crane was liberated from its claws, and the fish slipped from the crane's beak. When the hunter pierced the fish, he found a man in its belly The man had lost consciousness but was not

dead. The hunter nursed him carefully and restored him to life. He brought him to his home which was in the city of Navalaksa Here he stayed for a few days to convalesce. Amvada's life was now about to take a fresh turn.

"At night, as everybody lay asleep, Amvada woke up at the sound of someone going out It was the hunter's daughter. Amvada silently followed her. In the way, a ksatriya girl, a vaisya girl and a brahmin girl joined with her The four then reached the central place in the city. The four were bound for the residence of the seafaring merchant

"At the suggestion of the hunter's daughter, all the four changed themselves into she-goats At this Amvada became a he-goat and chased after the four The she-goats got terrified at this, gave up the idea of going further and returned home That night's adventure thus ended in nothing When they met in the morning, the question that was uppermost in their mind was about the goat's identity, and the reason of its chasing them last night During the following night they started again in the same manner, and even to-day the he-goat was there By his magical powers, Amvada fixed all the four she-goats so that they could no longer move This humbled the four at once, who now begged pitiably for their own release The he-goat told them that they would be released on condition that they rendered him a service, which was to arrange a meeting for him with the merchant's daughter Rupini To this they agreed and earned their own release Now, the five reached the merchant's house

"The house was a beautiful mansion encircled by a deep ditch full of water to protect it There was also a standing guard of five hundred strong Seated near the Goddess of Wealth, Rupini herself was playing with a monkey. Just

then the four girls stepped in with the goat in their company. Rupini enquired who it was and why it had been brought.

"One of the ladies requested her to direct the enquiry to the goat himself. Amvada now stood in his own form and informed the ladies how powerful he was because of magical powers and how the whole world lay at his feet. These were no mere words of a brag and the ladies were impressed by his manliness Amvada now demanded of Rupini the goddess and the monkey, at which she gave the following account regarding the acquisition of the two :

'Once I had propitiated Indra, who gave me this wonderful monkey. Not only does the monkey give me precious gems everyday, but my own luck and life are very intimately linked up with him. The moment the monkey is separated from me, I die So, sir, you cann t have the monkey without having me too'

"Amvada was prepared to accept her and to do so at once. But, as it turned out, there were several hurdles to be overcome before this union could be solemnised. As the lady revealed, the man must first acquire a special power called *aja-vidya*, and then he must marry Princess Viramati, daughter of King Malayachandra, and then alone could he marry her.

"Being a very ambitious man, to whom nothing was impossible, Amvada started at once and acquired *aja-vidya*. His next task was to clear the way leading to the acquisition of the princess As a first step to that, he turned King Malayachandra himself into a goat as he was out for a ride on horseback. This was a great disaster for the kingdom. When all efforts to restore the king failed, the minister ordered the closure of the city gates.

"Now, by his powers, Amvada created a huge army consisting of infantrymen, cavalrymen, elephant-men and

beseized the city. There was hardly any resistance in the absence of the king, and the city gates had to be thrown open at the order of the invading army. Amvada now entered into the city and was received by ministers, high dignitaries and leading citizens When he was apprised of the recent ill-luck that had befallen the city, Amvada said that the restoration of the king might not be very difficult provided he was promised the hand of the princess. This was too small a demand to which all agreed at once The king was restored to his original form to the joy of everybody and Amvada won the princess with such ease This cleared the way for his getting Rupini and the monkey, and the four ladies too With all these latest acquisitions he hastened to the Sugandha park where Amaravati was passing her days in deepest distress ever since his mysterious disappearance He had occasion now to meet his father-in-law, the king-monk and earn his sincere and warm blessings Needless to add, among all his wives, Amvada named Amaravati as number one

"With the Goddess of Wealth and the monkey in his possession, Amvada now reached Gorakh Yogini and presented these to her Thus he fulfilled the fourth order"

ORDER FIVE

'Fetch me the Ravi-Chandra (Sun-Moon) Lamp'

"Gorakh Yogini now ordered Amvada to fetch for her the Ravi-Chandra lamp from the house of Birochana, chief minister to King Devachandra of Devapattana in Saurastra

"Amvada started in the direction of Devapattana. In the way, he saw a brahmin, who had just returned from that city, and was on his way to a certain Princess Rohini of Singhpur in the north, near the Mahadurga hills This lady was in possession of a power to enter into another's body and the brahmin wanted to acquire it from her Amvada asked how he expected to get it from her unless he had some to give her in return The brahmin said that he was in possession of a power to hypnotise and this he was prepared to give to the princess

"Amvada now felt tempted to acquire the power from the brahmin So he told the brahmin that he too was in possession of a power that would give one command of a non-ending affluence Nothing could be more tempting than the acquisition of a wealthy status in life The brahmin was thus easily caught in the snare and parted with his power

"Amvada now changed his destination and in the company of the brahmin started for Singhpur. Having reached its outskirts, he suggested to the brahmin that the two should enter into the city, not together, but separately.

"Amvada now changed himself into a holy woman and planted herself at a central place in the city. Soon she

attracted many around her. The newly acquired power to hypnotise was made full use of to ensnare all the callers-on. So ran the story throughout the town that the holy woman was capable of forecasting if a man/woman's wishes would be fulfilled or not, and if the former, when Even the brahmin came for consultation. The holy woman told the brahmin in most unmistakable terms that he would never get the power from the princess and that his coming there was wholly useless

"The story of this great woman soon reached the ears of princess Rohini who at once sent for her This was the chance the lady was keenly waiting for, and she lost no time to appear before her The princess received her with due respect and offered her a throne to sit on. Then she placed before the lady many delicacies The lady declined them all telling the princess that, penance was now her only food. When the princess expressed her eagerness to know how the lady was initiated into the holy order so early in her life, she gave the following account of herself

'My father Surasena was the king of Surapur. When still a child, I lost my mother, and this was the beginning of my misfortunes I was sent to a school where the eyes of a certain *Vidyadhara*, Manibhadra, fell on me, and he carried me away to the Vaitadhya hills. There I was given training in certain powers. When I reached my youth, Manibhadra wanted to marry me, but his rival was his own son Subhadrabega Subhadrabega became a patricide for my sake, and was himself killed by his own brother Kiranabega, who entered the field as a rival suitor. So you see, my dear princess, two persons lost their lives for my sake which upset me very much. One day, I slipped out from the *Vidyadhara*'s house, and as I was about to jump into a tank to put an end to this very wretched life, somebody held me fast from behind. It was Kiranabega. I lived with him for

"But, holy mother, how shall I recognise him ?"

some time. One day, I discovered that he was a debauch, and I tried to improve him, but he won't listen. You can see, this gave a major turn to my own life I joined the order of nuns I spend my days on the bank of the Ganga. At this moment, I am on a pilgrimage, which has brought me to this city'

"The princess was impressed and happy She gave her own account to the lady, adding in the end that since good luck had brought the two together, she would be happy to make a gift of her great power to the lady The holy woman thus acquired from the princess her power to enter into another's body.

"Astrologers and soothsayers are men to whom people readily open their hearts Secrets which are kept closely guarded even from the very near and dear ones cease to be so to these men. The princess now felt quite free with the lady and asked about her own future The lady shut her eyes for a few moments and then said, 'Princess ! A bright future awaits thee The time for the arrival of thy suitor is not very far He will be a great hero, one among a million, a really worthy person, whom only the luckiest of the ladies may hope to get' 'But, holy mother, how shall I recognise him ?' 'My daughter ! You will know him when he sends you a flower vest' The holy woman then took leave and departed.

"Amvada now turned his steps towards Devapattana, for which he had started, and soon reached the city He accepted the hospitality of the gardener, and by virtue of his power to hypnotise, he soon attracted everybody in that household. To establish a lasting link with the family, he even married the gardener's daughter.

"One day, the mother-in-law told him, 'My son ! Show us some of your powers' Next day, as the lady was

going to the palace with two flower garlands, Amvada enchanted them with a magic powder and asked her to give these to the king and the minister, and none else The lady went out. Amvada then sprayed some magic powder at the city gate, at the palace gate and at the gate of the minister's house Now, all started quaking severely Some took it to be a depredation by ghosts and evil spirits, others openly forecast from the rumblings that the city would go underground Terrified, people rushed to the king As the king was about to say something, he and his chief minister both fell unconscious on the ground.

"There started a panic in the town Doctors were called in to attend the king and the minister, but they could not be cured On the second day, they regained consciousness no doubt, but began yelling like jackals On the third day, they were dancing stark naked and talking irrelevant things On the fourth day, they were rolling in the mud, dust and ashes and hurling them on the bystanders On the fifth day, the king was dancing and the minister was playing on the instrument On the sixth day, both started crying bitterly. On the seventh day, Amvada enquired from the gardener about the prevailing turmoil and confusion in the city. The gardener's wife smiled Soon it became known in the town that all this was the doing of a holy man living at the moment in the gardener's house So all flocked in there and requested Amvada to withhold his charm, which he agreed to do on the promise of a suitable reward. Amvada sought half the kingdom, the princess and the Ravi-Chandra lamp from the house of the minister. The demand was heavy, and in the absence of authority, the people were hesitant to commit. But Amvada refused to do anything to save the city till the award of things asked for was duly committed So they reluctantly agreed. Amvada then performed certain ceremonies and soon everything was all

right. Amvada's objective was attained. He not only won half the kingdom and the lamp, but also the hands of three ladies, the princess, the minister's daughter, and, of course, the gardener's daughter.

"Now, Amvada started for Singhpur On the way, he heard a pitious lamentation and discovered a young lady with a dead child on her shoulders. He obtained the following account from the lady :

'I am the daughter of a gardener I am married in this city, and got a son But my son died during my absence from home, and I could not have a talk with him during his last moments. It is this that upsets me and now I have decided to end my life by entering into a blazing pyre with this dead child'

"Amvada tried to console her, dilating at length on the transitoriness of life and uncertainty of human existence, but the lady would take nothing 'Tell me, sir, have I not a genuine cause to be aggrieved ?' said she very bitterly I couldn't talk with him during his last moments' Amvada told her that a dead person could not be restored to life, and enquired if she would feel consoled and happy, if the boy could be revived for some time to give the lady a chance to talk with him. She said, she would. This was not difficult for him to arrange with his power to enter into another's body. The dead child now said, 'Mummy ! Why do you weep ? It is my *karma* that gave me a short span of life and we are helpless before it You be calm Bewail not my loss.' The child was dead again.

'Amvada still remembered the forecast he had made as holy woman to Rohini to the effect that her man was about to come, and that he would send her a vest made of flowers He now requested the gardener's daughter to

prepare for him a flower vest and carry it to the princess. This she gladly did for her benefactor Amvada was a lucky man. He was married with the princess by her own brother.

"It was now time for him to return with all his wives, and more particularly with the Ravi-Chandra lamp, which was his assignment for this mission Soon he was in the presence of Corakh Yogini, to whom he presented the lamp. The Yogini was highly pleased and blessed him

"Thus Amvada fulfilled the fifth order, his luck favouring him all through, but more than that, his own ambition, bravery and exertions"

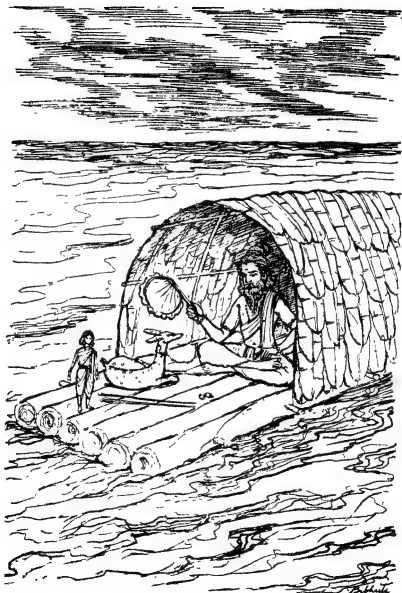
ORDER SIX

'Fetch me the All-bestowing Rod.'

"Repeated success fires ambition And this was so in Amvada's case The Yogini now gave him the assignment to fetch her the rod that fulfilled all desires. The rod, she told him, was in the possession of a versatile brahmin named Somesvara who lived in the city of Kodinna at the foot of the Sindhu mountain in the land of Sauvira.

"Amvada started in that direction In the way, he saw a river, on whose surface he saw a hut floating, which had a thatch of banana leaves He observed it very closely and saw a *yogi* behind the hut Inside the hut stood a she-deer whose body was shining like anything The *yogi* was seen fanning the animal It looked very unusual, and Amvada thought of detecting the mystery behind the whole thing. He first fixed the hut on the river, and then lifted himself up in the sky and swooped down on the *yogi*. When the *yogi* tried to resist, he threw him up in the sky. The fellow dropped dead on the ground

"Amvada now brought the hut to the river bank and checked all its belongings. The animal was tied with a golden chain There lay on the hut floor a golden image, a pair of ear-rings and two very solid canes, one red and the other white. Amvada knew not what was what But to make a start, he picked up one of the canes, and started beating the animal, and , lo behold, the deer changed into a beautiful princess

"Giving her own account, the princess told him that she

He saw a hut floating.

was the daughter of King Bira Singha of Bhojakataka in Bangadesa, that her own name was Ratnavati, that one day when she was out on horseback to fetch mercury from a certain well, the horse took her in a wrong direction, and she was in a dense forest 'There, sir, I fell in the hands of a *yogi*,' the princess went on, 'and the *yogi* cherished evil designs on me But luck favoured me and I could manage to escape '

"The lady continued 'But the fellow didn't give me up He came to my father's court one day and right there erected a pole of a luxuriant banana tree He then invited the king to pierce it As the king did so with his sword, a fine lady came out of it The king then enquired if this was a real person, or just magic The *yogi* assured the king that this was a real person, a lady in flesh and blood, as living as any other, named Ratnamala, the daughter of a *Vidyadhara* named Manibeg He further told the king that the lady had been brought there for him and that she would be his provided the king agreed to help him The king considered it to be a nice bargain and agreed at once without giving the proposal any consideration The *yogi* then said, 'Sir ! On the eighth day of the fortnight, a special propitiation of mine will reach its fruition You have to join with me on that day with the princess on the bank of the Suparna and see through its finale ' The king agreed and the *yogi* departed

"But the minister was unhappy about the arrangement, and on the appointed day, he advised the king at least not to take me in his company The king too regretted now for the consent he had given in a hurry and without sufficient consideration. As the two were discussing, the *yogi* appeared at the court to take us both with him When the king requested him to spare me, the *yogi* refused to do so, telling my father that my presence was particularly required

for his purpose, and that if the king would fail to honour his words, then a mighty calamity would befall on him.

" 'So, sir, I started in the company of my father, and we were on the bank of the Suparna The *yogi* was with us to make sure that none dropped out On the way, he picked up two canes, one red and the other white, from the forest. Then we entered into a cave with him, where was blazing a sacrificial fire The *yogi* sat propitiating his deity with various offerings in the fire It appeared to us now that we were wholly lost in his hands and there was no escape After some time, he took me into the cottage and beat me with the cane which changed me into a golden deer. Then he returned to the fire, gave three sweet balls in my father's hands and asked him to consecrate them in the fire desiring at the same time the fruition of his propitiation My father did as he was asked to do Soon the *yogi* dashed him into the fire and changed him into the golden image, which you yourself saw in the hut '

"As the lady forgot to throw light on the ear-rings, Amvada asked about them, to which the lady made the following revelation 'These had been acquired by the *yogi* himself from the goddess They are very exceptional things, sir, and when thrown in the sky, one is capable of shining like the moon for a whole year, and the other like the sun for full two years '

"With all the secrets acquired from the lady, Amvada now revealed his own identity. The princess was happy to be in the company of such a worthy person The two were married on the spot. The lady then expressed a desire to repair to her own city, where her brother, Samar Singha. who had really no information about them, was in charge of the administration in the absence of his father. This was a good idea which Amvada approved and the two started at once. As they reached the city, they

found it beseized by enemies, as it usually happened in the absence of the king Amvada was, however, more than a match for the whole army. He challenged it and made it flee. In the city, the two were received by Samar Singha, who got full report about her companion and saviour of the city from his own sister A fitting reception was arranged for the couple

"But these unforeseen adventures had so long kept Amvada away from his own mission, which he was now anxious to fulfil So without talking to anybody about it, one night he just disappeared and took the sky route Soon he was in the city of Kodinna When he made enquiries about the brahmin he was told by the people of that city that there were at least twenty-one brahmins in that city bearing the same name and having similar versatility Amvada was in confusion He must have the right man in order to have the all-bestowing rod He took shelter in a nearby temple to spend the night there He didn't sleep in the new place but just lay waiting till sun-rise. At night, he heard the foot-steps of somebody approaching the temple, and soon he saw, it was a lady, who slowly approached near a stone image in the temple. The image, the figure of a woman, expressed great anger at the lady's delayed arrival, and the lady begged to be forgiven on the plea that this was forced on her by the late return of her father, Somesvara, from the king's palace This apparently satisfied the image, who now descended from the pedestal, and started dancing before the god of love in the company of the lady. Just at that moment, Amvada made his surprise appearance, and asked who they were The lady was abashed for a moment Then gathering courage, she asked who he himself was 'Well, I'm Panchasirsa from the western region,' Said Amvada The lady expressed no more interest in him and went on minding her own business in the company of the image After some

time, the image told her companion, 'Won't you like to repair now to Vasavadatta's house?' 'A nice idea, indeed,' said the lady, 'but, pray, who is to drive our chariot and take us thither?' 'Why, here's Panchasirsa. He may help us,' said the image

"But Amvada was a very clever man and he would do nothing without striking a suitable bargain He agreed to take the ladies to wheresoever they wanted to go, but only on payment of a suitable remuneration The two were no less shrewd than he, and they wanted to enjoy a fun at his cost Now, Panchasirsa looked around for the bulls and they were nowhere to be seen Said he, 'Where are the yoke animals?' The two burst out laughing 'With a pair of yoke animals, none will need you to drive the chariot. Even a child will be as good for the purpose. Well, man, it's not your business Come and have a ride with us' This was too much of a challenge for a hero of Amvada's stature Still he sat on the chariot but fixed it with his power so that it would move no longer The pride of the two was thus shattered, and they begged to be forgiven, but the man won't budge till the two agreed to share with him the secret of flying a chariot without yoke animals Well, as there was no alternative to break the impasse, they did oblige the man, and the chariot, with the three passangers on, was now rushing through the air Soon they were with Vasavadatta who was pleased to receive her friends and entertain them with offers Amvada was introduced to her as the new chariot-driver

"The four then visited another of the ladies' friends, one Nagashri, who cordially received them As the four ladies were in the midst of merry-making, Amvada thought of playing a mischief. He offered them betel leaves containing magic powder for their chewing As they gladly put the staff in their mouth, they all changed into deer. Amvada

now picked up the deer that was Chandrakanti and returned to her city. The deer soon found her own home. Amvada following at a safe distance Thus he got the clue as to where exactly the all-bestowing rod could be

"When the brahmin came to know of his daughter' plight, he became very sorry The matter was brought to the notice of the king, who started at once to see the deer with his own eyes On the way, his eyes fell on a man, who was driving a chariot that had no yoke animals The king took him to be an exceptional man, with the gift of divine powers He enquired if he was a *deva* or a *Vidyadhara*, to which the man replied that he was the latter. The king then apprised him of his difficulties, but, said he, though capable to rid him of the situation, he was not particularly inclined to get involved in such earthly matters

"The two now reached the brahmin's house and the deer was brought there The man made a careful observation and said, 'It's a tough job, sir, I have to apply a good many of my powers to cure her But then what about my reward ?'

Reward was no consideration in such a difficult situation when the specialist was free to quote any fee The man asked for the all-bestowing rod and the king agreed Chandrakanta was soon restored to her own form. At Chandrakanta's earnest request, the man went to the nether world where her three friends were still roaming in the same animal form They too were rescued from that miserable state Everybody was happy, and Amvada's mission was fulfilled

"With the all-bestowing rod, he was soon before the Yogini, who was very happy to receive her thing. She blessed the hero profusely for the effective fulfilment of the mission

"Thus Amvada fulfilled the sixth order of the Yogini."

ORDER SEVEN

'Fetch me Velvet from the Crown'

"Gorakh Yogini's seventh and final order for Amvada was, 'Fetch me the velvet from the crown of King Chandiswara of the city of Soparaka in the southern region

"With the Yogini's blessings, he started for the south, and having passed through many villages and towns, he reached a park named Devabrahma in the outskirts of the city It was a beautiful park full of many trees profusely bearing fruits and flowers He was particularly attracted by the smell of a juicy fruit and stood beneath the tree As he was about to extend his hands, a monkey, who was perched on a branch, said, 'Sir ! Listen to me first, before you touch the fruit, otherwise you will be deformed.' Amvada stopped. The monkey continued, 'To the south of this park, there's a hill, Tungagiri, on which there is a mango tree Bring a fruit from that tree, and then you are free to touch those on this '

"Amvada was surprised What could be special about that mango tree ? What's the relation between that tree and this ? If there be any, why so ? He went there. As, he was about to pluck a fruit, the branches of the tree shot up towards the sky. But Amvada was undaunted. He jumped up and was on the tree itself. At this, the tree got uprooted and started floating in the air, with Amvada enjoying the landscape that was spread beneath. The tree soon reached the *Nandanavana*, and stopped therein. Amvada now alighted from the tree.

"As he looked around, he saw a ditch with flames emerging out of it. Many beautiful men and women in wonderful dresses and jewellery were coming and going out, or moving to and fro. Musical instruments were playing soft music. As he was enjoying the scene, a divine person came and stood beside him Said he, 'Hello, sir, how was the mango tree?' Amvada startled, but in a moment, he composed himself and retorted, 'Who was the monkey? Why is this fire? Why is this drama?

"The *deva* now started his delineation." I am Hansa, ruler of Laksmipur in the nether world It is I who had placed the monkey on the tree and improvised the mango tree to bring you here. This was an assignment to me from the *Vidyadharas*, and there's a purpose behind the whole thing. King Sivakara of the city of Sivankara did not have a son. He propitiated all means for it, but to no effect. Then a monk named Visvadvipa gave him a fruit to get him a son, and the fruit was to be shared by the king with the queen. But the king acted foolishly and took the whole fruit himself Soon he developed all signs of pregnancy. This was a great shame He stopped appearing at the court and cancelled all public engagements. But the matter could not be suppressed and the report spread like wildfire throughout the town None had now any doubt that the king would meet with a premature end.

'From the seventh month since conception, the king started having false pain, and it was terrific and unbearable. The king had no rest even for a moment The *Vidyadharas* then held a meeting, at which one suggestion was that *Deva* Dharanendra should be propitiated but the question was, who was to do it for the king At last, the king's brother Sivasankara offered himself to do this and this was approved by everybody. The propitiation started on an auspicious day and the *deva* made his appearance on the seventh day.

Many beautiful men and women were around the fire.

Necessary submission was made on behalf of the king. Dharanendra at once brought some ablution water from the temple of Lord Parsva and prescribed its use by the king. The water gave him relief.

'At the right time, a son was born to the king without causing any difficulty, and the king's long-standing desire for a son was thus fulfilled, but the king died shortly thereafter Dharanendra himself crowned the new-born babe as king and named him Dharanendra Chudamani after himself It is for his sake that the *Deva* created the nether world, and the way thither is through this fire

'In this new world created by him, sir, Dharanendra has provided all facilities for its residents. There's also a temple dedicated to Lord Parsva, who is worshipped by the devotees and propitiated for the removal of evils. Such is the commandment of the founder that all *Vidyadharas* who are sixteen or above must compulsorily pay homage to the Lord at least on the four prescribed days in the month, failing which they will not only be deprived of their *vidyas* but may even turn into lepers. To-day, sir, it's one of the prescribed days, and you see so many *Vidyadharas*, men and women, around the fire.'

"The *Vidyadhara* stopped at this point, but his account did not reveal the purpose for which Amvada had been brought here. So when the point was raised, the *Vidyadhara* started again 'Sir, it has been very unfortunate that on one of the auspicious days, the king himself violated the commandment by mistake, and thus he has not only forfeited his powers, but is also suffering from a virulent type of leprosy. The *Deva* was propitiated again but he is in a violent rage and wouldn't pacify The queen herself is on an indefinite fast and has already covered twentyone days. The *Deva* now appears to have mellowed down a little. He appeared to the queen in a dream. It is at his suggestion

that you have been brought here to save the king. It is from the *Deva* again that we came to know of your arrival at the Devabrahma park at this time

"The *Vidyadhara* now brought Amvada to Laksmipur, and, needless to add, the king was cured of his leprosy This became an occasion of great rejoicing in the city. The hero was duly honoured by the king and the queen. Therefrom Amvada returned to the city of Soparaka, where he had yet to fulfil his mission. It was spring season, and he saw Princess Surasundari in the park He sat down dressed like a monk and applied his hypnotic powers to attract the princess towards him When she came and sat down, the monk started narrating his experience in diverse lands, Banga, Kalinga and many others, and at one moment, as the princess was wholly absorbed, he gave her a pinch of enchanted ashes, which the lady affixed on her forehead.

"When the king received the report of the princess' meeting an unknown monk in the park and talking with him for a long time, he felt perturbed He asked his men to arrest the fellow at once As they came near him, they were all hypnotised and could do nothing They sat down with their heads bent low Even the same thing happened to the police chief And then came the king, but he too fell a victim of the spell and sat down helpless Amvada made full use of this chance and took out the velvet from the king's crown Later, at the earnest request of the princess, he withdrew the spell, which he had no reason to continue after his mission had been fulfilled The princess now married him With the velvet in his possession, Amvada once more stood before Gorakh Yogini and placed it at her feet

"Thus Amvada, the man of ambition, blessed by his auspicious *karma*, fulfilled all the orders of the great

Yogini, who now blessed the hero from the bottom of her heart. By dint of his great adventures, Amvada was now a master of several kingdoms, husband of 32 worthy ladies, any one of whom would be considered a great acquisition, and commander of many powers, charms and magics, most powerful, most gifted, most worthy, admired by men and *devas* alike"

"Lack of wealth is not as great a handicap in a man's life as lack of enterprise, and in the absence of the latter, even the wealthiest of men cannot achieve anything. Amvada started as a poor man He had neither the support of influential parents, nor the backing of resourceful friends, and yet by dint of his ambition, capacity and endeavour, he attained a status difficult to conceive even in a dream. Three things in particular helped him, his ***karma*** (call it 'luck' if you please), his great exertions and Gorakh Yogini's guidance A man of ambition, Amvada was now known all the world over as a great hero.

"Oh king and gentlemen of the court! I am now nearing my story's end The great man of whom I have tendered you a complete account is my own parent. He was so grateful to his inspirer, the Yogini, that he visited her thrice every day to pay homage. In great affection, the Yogini called him *Vidyasiddha* (perfected in arts) She was so favourably disposed towards my father that she often bestowed on him very exceptional gifts and powers. It is in this way that he came to acquire the great treasure of King Harischandra which lay hidden beneath her meditation seat. All that I have recounted at this court, oh king and gentlemen, about this great man is a true account of him obtained first-hand and there is no concoction, distortion or interpolation by me at any stage.

"At the death of the worthy lady, my father became very much depressed. At this time, he met Ganadhara

Kesi, a Jaina spiritual stalwart, and Amvada said unto him, 'Holy sir : I have heard that Jainism is powerful and helpful, but does it compare with Saivism ?' To this the Ganadhara gave the following reply :

'Oh king ! A little knowledge about anything cannot give you a full view of it. A frog in the well knows nothing of the mighty ocean So long you have followed only the Saiva path and you hardly know much about the path of the Jinas. Your acquaintance with it will itself resolve your doubts.'

"At my father's request, the Ganadhara obliged him by paying him a visit at his palace. From that day on, everyday, the great savant developed at length the Jaina spiritual theme for the enlightenment of the king. This had a tremendous impact on the king who became inspired and courted equanimity as a first step, and then the twelve vows of a *sravaka*. The Ganadhara told my father that Lord Mahavira himself was wandering in that region fulfilling his earthly mission, and Amvada paid homage and obeisance to the Lord in the city of Visala. Said he unto the Lord, '*Bhante* ! When shall I be liberated of this mundane life' ? To this the Lord said, 'Amvada ; You will become the twentysecond *tirthankara* named Devatirthakrit in the next up-phase (*utsarpini*) of the time-cycle.' Amvada was now on his way to Champa, and the Lord apprised him that in that city there lived a great *sravika* Sulsa by name who was very much advanced in equanimity. Amvada had at once a desire to meet the lady of whom even the Lord spoke in so eloquent terms

"Posing as Brahma, he now descended at the eastern gate of the city. All people came to pay homage but not Sulsa. Next day, he appeared as Siva at the southern gate, and on the third day as Vishnu at the western gate. Only he failed to attract Sulsa. So Amvada thought to appear

as a *tirthankara* and he did it on the fourth day descending at the northern gate of the city and holding a holy congregation there. Sulsa reacted, 'It's all a sham A *tirthankara* who is already liberated will not come down and there cannot be a twenty-fifth *tirthankara*. I'm not going to witness this bit of jugglery'

"Now, Amvada came to meet Sulsa, the great *sravika*, at her own residence and to congratulate her He revealed to her how he had very skilfully organised the tests, and how the great lady came out each time untouched by them. 'How true the Lord's words about thee !' added he The king then returned to his city and fixed himself in those spiritual activities that would later acquire for him the name and status of a *tirthankara* He became a devout *sravaka* and attracted many others by his example In the end he courted fast unto death, as prescribed in the Jaina scriptures and earned a life in the celestial regions All his 32 queens followed in his great footsteps"

"Coming to myself, oh king ! because of the coming up of the inauspicious *karma*, my vast kingdom is now gone, and is in occupation by my enemies I am a pauper without means even to support myself In the expectation of getting some of my father's treasures and throne now hidden under the meditation seat of the Yogini, I went thither, when my departed mother descended from her celestial abode and stood in my way. She told me that she and all her co-wives were now engaged in safeguarding the treasure and the throne and that I should not strive to unearth them She told me frankly that I had no luck for wealth and advised me to depart.

"Since, oh king ! my own luck does not help me, I thought, it might be reversed if I could win some lucky person on my side. And so I am here to invoke your assistance in the expectation that it would brighten up my own prospects"

The prospect of a windfall gain allured the king at once and he came to the spot. As he was about to dig it, a voice was heard from under the ground saying ' Oh king! This is not meant for thee So desist It's all marked for King Vikramaditya of Ujjain.' The matter ended there. King Vikram Singha returned to his own city, and out of compassion for prince Kuruvaka, he sanctioned for him a suitable pension for his support

Long, long thereafter, Amvada's treasures and throne were unearthed by Vikramaditya, the great king of Ujjain, who not only started an era after his own name, but became a legendary hero all over India His name is rememberd to this day with great respect and admiration.

MUNIPATI

(the story of a great monk who was once a king)

In the Angadesa, there was a city named Munipatika, where reigned King Munipati He was the very embodiment of justice and power Prithvi was his first queen and Munichandra was the crown-prince

One day, the king was enjoying the company of the queen in her chamber and the latter was combing his hairs. Suddenly she said, "Sir ! The thief is in "

The king startled and looked around but did not see the thief. So he said,

"What do you say ? Where's the thief ?"

The queen pulled out a grey hair from the king's head, and, displaying it, said,

"See, sir ! Here's the thief sent by old age."

This proved to be a very significant observation and turned the king's gaze inwards Thought he,

'The youth has started fading out, I'm still engrossed in attachment, living as a householder. Kingdom, wealth and kinsmen are all like snares I have wasted a long time with these Now, it's time for me to withdraw. Old age is not particularly suitable for spiritual practices, since this age generates physical disability, which is a great handicap To practise austerities and penance, one must have a good physique. Now, what's past is gone , but I must take care of what remains and make good use of it.

The king at once shared his thoughts with the queen, who not only approved of them, but suggested that they should be given effect to as early as possible. The king abdicated in favour of the crown-prince and went into voluntary retirement

Now, when you have a sincere will, a way comes of itself Just about the time, the king went into retirement, Acharya Dharmaghosa visited the city. The retired king became very happy. He came to pay his homage and obeisance to the monk and received fresh inspiration from his words. He joined the holy order and began to propitiate knowledge and conduct. These were duly supplemented by penances and meditation Having thus acquired considerable scriptural knowledge and many qualities, Monk Munipati obtained permission for wandering alone.

The life of a monk is a life of hardship and ordeals , but one who is intent on self-realisation relishes these as inevitable to spiritual life In the course of his wanderings, one winter, Munipati reached a park outside the city of Avanti In the midst of bitter cold and chilly wind, he sat in meditation in a corner of the park, Totally unmindful of physical pain, he fixed himself on a higher spiritul plane. Just at that time a few cowherd boys were on their way home after the day's work. When they saw the monk wholly exposed to cold, they erected a screen round him with their wrappers. They thought, they would pick them up next day on their way to the pasture The boys went to their respective homes

In the same city, there lived a brahmin named Bodhibhatta, who was rich, popular and kind. Farming was his principal occupation. Besides, he was a big oilseed merchant which earned him the nickname 'Tilabhatta' (tila = sesamum, oilseed). But his wife Dhanashree was the reverse of the merchant, being cruel, narrow-minded and ill-tempered. But he held his wife in the greatest esteem and love.

Once, to procure some money for her private use, Dhanashree sold out a part of the oilseed stock without the knowledge of her husband, but soon she became afraid, lest he should come to know of this, and, to hide the deal, she hatched a plan at once In the night of the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month, when it was pitchy dark, she went out and reached that portion of the park where Monk Munipati stood immersed in meditation. She removed all her clothes, covered her body with bird's plumes, darkened her face with ashes and soots and filled a discarded wine-pot with burnidg charcoal. In her dishevelled hairs, she looked like a spirit Now with the charcoal in one hand and a sharp knife in the other, she appeared before Tilabhatta with a great gust As Tilabhatta started trembling, the spirit would terrorise him all the more by giving an occasional puff at the fire She occasionally uttered.

"Shall I eat *tila* or shall I eat Tilabhatta ?"

Tilabhatta was wholly upset He knew not what it could be and what he should do now Meanwhile, the spirit thundered

"Oh ye wretch ! For long, have I been looking for thee But now ye are in my clutches I won't stop till I kill thee So remember thy deity Thou shalt never escape from me "

Tilabhatta's only concern now was how to wriggle out of the situation He looked around, but he could find nothing to hold any hope for him So he rolled at her feet and begged for his life, saying, "Goddess ! I am thy servant Have mercy on me. I am helpless I shall always obey thy command. My life is in thy hands Save me, spare me "

With bloodshot eyes, the spirit said,

"Don't ye know me ? I am the well-known goddess who thrives on oilseeds. If thy life be dear to thee, then make gift of thy entire stock of oilseeds unto me. Nothing else

can save thee. If ye doeth not what I ask ye to do, if thy stock be too precious to thee that ye cannot give it up, then I must have thee. Either must I have Hark ye?"

Tilabhatta agreed to surrender the oilseed stock in exchange for his life. Said he,

"Take ye my stock of oilseeds, ye goddess, and spare my life If I live, with thy blessings, I can build up stocks again."

'But then ask not anyone about the stock, I say, mention them not to anyone. I have accepted 'em all. Thou art now out of dangar"

Having thus achieved her purpose, the lady returned to the place where she had discarded her clothes She had then a thorough wash in a nearby pool and was dressed again Now it so happened that there was a cremation ground not very far from that place and a dead body was on the burning pyre In the glow emitted from the fire, the lady saw a monk standing, and became apprehensive that this fellow might have been an eye-witness of all her vile deeds. Lest he should give exposure to her character to the people of that city, the lady at once thought out a plan to safeguard her position and became ready to perpetrate a dreadful act. She picked up a burning log from the pyre and hurled it at the monk. She hesitated not even for once to do such a cruel thing. Then she started back and reached her home.

Soon the screens around the monk caught fire and the monk's body was roasted. It could no longer remain in the standing pesture but dropped on the ground, but he was still fixed in meditation and equanimity. Though intensely pained in the body, he didn't allow this infliction to touch his soul, nor did he permit any passion to take possession of him.

For the rest of the night, Bodhibhatta had no peace. The incident haunted him like a nightmare and gave him no rest. He told his wife in the morning,

"My dear ! I have heen cheated by the forest diety. My head is reeling. I cann't sit. I must lie down. Please spread the bed again."

Bodhibhatta lay down. Soon his temperature ran high and he was in delirium When, after a few hours, his restlessness subsided, he was no more.

A sinful act has its own tongue , it never remains a secret. People came to know a good part of the incident leading to the premature death of the merchant, and the lady was turned out from the city. But there was no repentance in her. She started a vicious life and met with a vicious end.

Coming back to the king-monk, in the morning, when the cow-herd boys came to pick up their clothes, they were shocked to find that the clothes were no more , instead, the monk's roasted body lay on the ground. They were bitterly penitent.

"We had thought of helping the man , instead, our doing has injured him so badly."

Without wasting time on the spot, they at once came to the house of a merchant named Kunchika in that city.

Kunchika was a well-known follower of the *Sramana* path.. He was so named because he held every evening the keys (called *kunchi*) for many a grannery in the city. When the boys narrated the tragic incident to him, the merchant also regretted it very much and hurried to the spot in their company. The monk still lay unconscious. He was removed to the merchant's house and placed in a separate room. As a monk could be nursed only by some fellow monks, some monks in the neighbourhood were immediately alerted and they came at once When asked about the necessary medicines, the merchant told them that all other medicines would be available with him, except one, *lakkha-paka* (meaning boiled 1,00,000 times) oil, which the

monks were advised to procure from one Antukari (meaning never addressed as 'tu'—'you' in a derogatory sense) Bhatta.

To help a fellow monk in difficulty or distress is a part of a monk's spiritual routine. Two monks started at once to fetch the oil. This helped the quick recovery of the king-monk. He conveyed his gratitude to the monks and was about to move out, when the merchant prayed for his stay there during the monsoons. Munipati agreed. A room was allotted to him for his stay. As a routine, he spoke holy words during the days and spent the nights in meditation and *kayotsarga*.

In worldly life, wealth is a great separator It creates a rift between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, what to speak of others. The merchant's son always quarrelled with his father for his own share ; and the merchant was apprehensive, lest the son should usurp a good chunk out of it some day without his knowledge. So he thought to keep a part of his wealth in hiding at some safe place. No sooner did he think of it than he took action. He put a huge treasure in an underground cell beneath the chamber allotted for the monk's use.

Somehow, the son got the clue. So, one day, he took out the whole treasure and filled up the vacant space by a huge slab of stone. When the monsoon months were nearing their end, and the merchant came to check his treasure, he found there nothing but a big slab. He became nervous and the earth slipped from beneath his feet. He started thinking who could have done this vile deed, and the more he thought, the more he felt sure that this could not have been done by any other person except the king-monk. So he charged the monk in the clearest possible terms. Said he

"Like the *sechanaka* (watering) elephant, holy sire, you have been ungrateful enough to remove my treasure."

The monk was startled at this unexpected charge, but restraining himself, he said,

"Good man! Who was this *sechanaka* elephant, and what ungrateful act did he perpetrate?" The merchaht started,

"There lived some elephants on the bank of the Ganga. Their leader, an extremely stout fellow, was the very embodiment of desires and passions He was in the habit of killing all new-born elephants, so that he would have all the female elephants exclusively to himself One female elephant knew his habit and intention, As the time of her delivery drew near, she left the place and took shelter near a hamlet of holy men.

"The baby elephant was born and grew up into a fine animal, playing all the time and watering the plants with his trunk."

The merchant continued,

"Life has its rise and fall The leader elephant was now in his old age, deprived of vigour and strength Sechanak was in the very prime of youth So one day, he killed his aged father and usurped his leadership Now, thought he, some other elephant might be born under the protection of holy men, like himself, and become his rival some day, as he himself had been to his own father To secure himself against that possibility, he destroyed the cottages of holy men under whose protection he himself had been born and brought up,"

Now, giving a twist to his narrative the merchant said, "Holy man! I gave you shelter during the rainfall months and you have stooped so low as to remove my treasure. This has not been a behaviour befitting a monk. I feel ashamed at your behaviour, which reminds me of another episode involving a minister named Krishnapaksika."

The monk was himself feeling very awkward but still he said, "Merchant! Who was this minister, and what was his episode? How do you compare me with this man?"

The merchant started "Oh monk ! In the city named Prithivibhusana, there reigned a king named Suklapaksa. His first queen was Suklaparinama. Krishnapaksika was his minister, who was ruthless and cruel, unfair and cunning. One day, a merchant came to that city from afar, and presented a fast steed to the king. To test it, the king mounted on its back and put it to gallop. Soon he was in a dense forest. Both the horse and the rider were now out of breath. The horse soon died

"Distressed by hunger and thirst, the king was wandering in the forest He ate some wild fruits and drank water from a tank. Then he met a holy man who brought him to his cottage. Now in the cottage, the king saw a lady, who was the very embodiment of beauty and good luck. He felt attracted towards her in a moment. The lady saw the king and had herself a similar feeling towards him. The king cast frequent glances at her. This was noticed by the holy man who at once cautioned him But the king did not hide his feeling and curiosity. He frankly asked, 'Holy sire ! Who is this lady ? Who are her parents ? How did she come here ? Is she married or still a spinster ?' The hermit smiled and said, 'Oh king ! Her life history is very long. But since you have expressed a curiosity about it, I must make it short for you. Vidyadhara Dharmasena is a king on the Vivekadri mountain This is his daughter named Nivritti. As she was seated one day at her window high up in her father's mansion, a flying *Vidyadhara* saw her and carried her away. As the girl shouted for help, her father at once pursued the culprit Feeling himself insecure, he dropped the girl on the ground near here and escaped for the safety of his life. But Dharmasena would not stop till the wrong-doer was duly punished. So he left his daughter in my custody here, and has gone after him, telling me, in case he did not turn up within a reasonable time, to settle this girl in marriage with a deserving person, who must be in r

sion of power to enter into another's body. The monk added. But it is long since Dharmasena had gone, and it seems he may not come back.'

"The king was happy to note that the lady was not yet married, but he himself was not in possession of the power to enter into another's body, a very severe condition imposed by her father for a seeker of the lady's hand. Finding the king in a difficult situation, the hermit gave the following solution 'You may marry her but till you are in possession of the said power, keep her not in your harem.'

"To this the king agreed, and the marriage was celebrated. By that time, the king's men also reached that place while searching for him. All were happy to see the new queen. While departing, the king was again reminded by the hermit of the condition, and the king assured him that he was fully alive to it and would duly honour it.

"Queen Nivritti was not carried to the palace accordingly. She was housed in the royal park But the king didn't know where and from whom to get the power He took his minister into confidence who suggested that an alms-house might be erected soon, and as it would be visited by many holy men everyday, he himself would be on the look-out for one who might be in possession of the power or at least be able to guide as to where and from whom to get it

"The suggestion was accepted by the king and the alms-house was ready. Hundreds of holy men visited it everyday, but none could be detected who was in possession of the power or who could help in giving a clue to its acquisition.

"Six months passed in this way. One day, a carpet merchant came to that city and by talking with him the minister had a feeling that the fellow might be able to help. So he had a discussion with him in the matter. The fellow thought for a while and said, 'Surely did I meet such *yogi*, but it is extremely difficult to reach him.'

"Surely did I meet such a *yogi*."

"The minister expressed eagerness about him, telling him that in view of the stupendous problem they were in, no difficulty was big enongh to them. So the man started again · 'At a distance of about 96 miles from my city, there's a dense forest, at the entrance of which there are two palm trees On one of them is sometimes perched a crow and on the other a swan. As you enter into the forest and reach its end, you see a mountain named Lokagra, and on top of it is the seat of Yogi Sadananda who is always in the ***padmasana*** posture. He has the power you are looking for. If he favours you, you may get it.'

"The minister was happy to get the clue and he informed the king about it The king said, 'But what's the city of the carpet-dealer ? Till we know that, we cannot reach there "

"The minister introduced the merchant to the king. Giving the geography of his city, the merchant said, 'Your Majesty ! As you cross the boundary of your realm, you will pass through 12 villages, 9 metropolitan cities and 5 towns, before you reach my city.' Now the king understood the exact location He rewarded the man for the information The good news was revealed in time to queen Nivritti. The lady was very intelligent. She at once told the king that in no case should he take the minister with him, since the fellow was crafty, ungrateful and malicious. She went to the extent of telling him that his own life would be in danger in case the minister went with him. For the rest, she wished him a good luck.

"The king too shared the queen's feeling and he agreed. But the minister did not want to miss this chance and pursued him like his shadow The king tried his best to dissuade him, but he would by no means stay behind.

"The two started, full of enthusiasm, without caring for the fatigue, and they covered a very long distance of 5600

miles. They passed through villages, towns and metropolitan areas and at last reached the great forest. They were now at the very gate of success. The two palm trees were there, with a swan on one of them and so, as per instruction, they entered into the forest. At last, they were on the top of the mountain and saw the *yogi* from a distance What a brilliant forehead, glowing eyes, radiant body, a very embodiment of peace ! The king and the minister could scarcely remove their eyes from him They came near him and sat down with humility When the meditation was over, the *yogi* opened his eyes, but he didn't care for the two strangers who were seated before him. So the king and the minister stayed on.

"The two having successfully passed the test of perseverance, one day, the *yogi* said to the king, 'I am pleased with thee. Ask for a boon' The king humbly said, 'Holy sire ! 'I have come all the way to this distant place only by thy attraction, and I am now at thy feet I entreat thee to give me the power to enter into another's body" The *yogi* agreed, but he said that the king alone was fit to receive it, not the other man, the minister, whom he declared wholly unfit.

"This was a great disappointment for the minister, and tears rolled down his cheeks The king took pity on him and begged for him 'Sire ! If my minister's desire remained unfulfilled, I shall myself feel somewhat uneasy So, out of your great kindness for me, please permit my minister to share the power with me'

"Cautioning the king, the *yogi* said, 'But, king, if I agree to your request, that will do you harm Take care of your own future. In being too kind to the minister, you will simply endanger your own life. He is no worthy person.'

"The king was pure at heart. He would never see bad in another. So he repeated his prayer to the point of being insistent. The *yogi* tried his best to caution the king, but at last he gave the power to both.

"Having acquired the power, the two started back for their own city. Having crossed the great forest, they reached a pool where they stopped to take the test. The king saw there a dead elephant. With a desire to test the newly acquired power, he entrusted his own body to the minister and entered into the dead animal Soon the dead elephant stood up and merrily entered into the forest. The minister now entered into the king's body, destroyed his own, and reached the city. A grand reception was organised and the minister, in the body of the king, had a ceremonial entrance into the city.

"All were curious to know what had happened to the minister. To stop the gossip, the minister in the person of the king made it known that as they were coming back after the acquisition of the power, they were chased by a lion, who would have killed him but for the timely intervention of the worthy minister The minister thus gave his life to save the life of his master. His was a devotion worth adoring and emulating.

"As the king in the body of the elephant returned after some time, he saw neither his own body nor the minister. He had his suspicion. He now remembered the warning given by the queen He also remembered the *Yogi's* words to which he had paid no heed. He had now no doubt that he would have difficult times ahead of him. He took the way to the city. He had not an iota of doubt that this was a conspiracy by the minister to get the queen.

"Meanwhile, the minister in the body of the king visited the queen in herapartment. She displayed great joy to receive him. But having talked for a while with him, she realised that this was none other than the rogue, the minister, in the person of the king, and that the king had somehow been concealed or wiped out of existence. But the wicked fellow must be duly exposed And to do this, she must

gain time. She said to him, 'My dear sir ! I am pretty glad at the successful acquisition of power by you. But when you had gone out, it had appeared to me that you would at least take six months to return. So I started a vow which enjoins a celibate living, lying on the ground and restricted diet. Now only a few days remain for the fulfilment of that vow. May I hope that you will permit me to see it through. Till then, sir, it behoves you not to come to this apartment.'

"This was not a very unusual request. So the minister agreed and returned to the palace.

"The king in the body of the elephant was meanwhile proceeding towards the city at a very quick pace. The minister kept himself informed about the movement of elephant. As he drew near the city, he asked his men to kill him The men started at once, and when they saw the elephant, they chased after him. The poor king in the body of the elephant was no match for so many men. So, finding the situation out of hand, he came out of the elephant's body and entered into the body of a dead deer. The minister at once understood it and ordered his men to kill the deer So the king at last transferred himself into the body of a dead parrot and flew away in the sky The bird perched on a mango tree near the queen's apartment and was caught in a hunter's net. As the hunter was about to kill it, the bird said in a human voice. 'Why kill me ? Let me alone and I can give you much wealth.' This caused the hunter the greatest surprise The parrot added, 'Take me to the market-place and sell me for Rs. 1,00,000. You will surely find a buyer,'

"So the hunter came to the market-place at once. Soon there was a crowd round the bird who spoke in the human voice. But the price was too high and hence there was no bidder. The queen's own maid saw the parrot who recognised her and said, 'Good lady ! How is thy mistress ?'

"The maid reported it to the queen and the queen felt a curiosity about the bird She also felt a tie of attachment and kinship towards it She decided to buy the bird and in order to have the money from the treasury, she sent the maid to the king The king told the maid curtly, 'Such a fabulous amount may be needed to buy a pedigree horse or elephant, but not surely to buy such a petty thing. I cannot waste so much money after it.'

"When the maid reported this, the queen said, 'Surely this man is not my husband. He would not have been so mean and inconsiderate. He would never deny me anything I ask for This is a rogue and a miser too By some means, he has got possession of the king's body' She took out the money from her own purse and gave it to the maid asking her to bring the bird at once She had a feeling that the bird might be able to throw some light on the whole situation.

"Although the minister had curtly dismissed the maid, on second thought, he felt that there must be something behind the queen's interest in the bird, This fired his determination to prevent the parrot from reaching the queen's hand He came at once to her apartment The queen was so angry with him that she did neither receive nor speak to him The minister, in a hurry, took the bird into his hand and separated its neck The king at once gave up the body of the parrot and entered into the body of a dead bee.

"The queen could no longer check her anger 'Why did you kill my bird? I had bought it with my own money, not yours, and what right did you have to touch it? You must restore it to life at once, or I court self-immolation in your very presence.'

"The minister felt helpless. He had no words to meet the lady. He knew not what to do. The queen thundered, 'There's no escape now. You must restore my parrot to life at once, or see the consequence.'

"You must restore it to life at once

"The minister now went into another room, placed the king's body on the couch and himself entered into the parrot's body. The parrot was alive again and the queen took it in her hand, patting it gently on its back and displaying great affection for it. This was a chance for the king who was sheltered in the bee. He came out of the bee and reoccupied his own body. He rushed to the queen at once and she embraced him. The king narrated the whole story and the queen was about to kill the parrot; but the king prevented her from doing so and requested her to leave the minister to his own luck.

"The minister realised that he had been badly deceived, but there was no remedy The parrot was placed in an iron cage."

Concluding his narrative, Kunchika said.

"Oh monk! You have behaved with me like the minister who had deceived his own master I tried to help you, but you have cheated me Such conduct befits you not"

"Oh merchant'! You have misunderstood me. Your surmise is wholly wrong. It smacks of a deep ignorance on your part to place a monk at par with a greedy minister A monk's conduct, his supreme detachment, his freedom from greed, these have been exemplified by the four disciples of Acharya Suhasti."

"Oh monk! Who were these disciples of Acharya Suhasti? What proof did they give of having conquered greed?" The monk started his narrative

"King Srenika of Rajagriha had many queens of whom Sunanda and Chelana were well-known. Abhayakumar, a very meritorious person, and the minister of the realm, was Sunanda's son Once, Lord Mahavira, in the course of his wanderings came and halted at the Gunasila Chaitya outside the city. The message about the Lord's arrival was sent to the monarch Srenika came there with his whole

family to pay homage and obeisance. The congregation was full. Thousands had come to listen to the Lord.

"At that time, a leper came to the assembly, His body was rotten and oozing out foul smell. He came to the Lord, placed his head on the Lord's feet and besmeared them with his pus. The king felt a disgust but held his tongue in the persence of the Lord. Just then, the Lord sneezed and the leper remarked, 'You die.' The king was hot with rage. Just then, the king sneezed and the leper observed, 'You live'. The king was now in confusion. Just then Abhayakumar sneezed and the fellow said, 'Live or die as you please' A fresh shock to the king's thought. Now, a butcher, Kalasaukarika by name, sneezed, and the leper commented, 'Neither live, nor die.'

"To the king, the fellow appeared to be haughty and arrogant who besmeared the Lord's feet with his pus, who wished him death and made such curt observations about others, He overcame his confusion and asserted his authority. He asked his men to take him into custody as soon as he moved out of the assembly and execute him at once. The leper heard the king's order but expressed no concern After the sermon, he quietly stood up and went out The king's men were ready outside, but before they could lay their hands on him, he assumed a divine form and disappeared in the sky.

"The men at once reported the matter to the king, and the king made the following submission to the Lord. '*Bhante* ! Who was this leper ?'

The Lord said, 'Oh King ! His is a very long and complicated story. His curt observations throw light on many secret things.'

'*Bhante* ! If it suits thy convenience, I am keen to know all about him.'

The Lord started.

" 'In Kosambi, the city of King Satanika, there lived a brahmin, Seduka, who was not only poor but also foolish.

Priyakanta was his wife He lived on public charity, and so unlucky was he that in order to earn just enough for subsistence, he had to work very hard Everyday, he took a full trek of seven villages, begging food from door to door. Oh king ! Misery shrinks a man's life, and any flicker of hope finds hard to strike a root in him. In this state of misery, Seduka's wife became pregnant, and as the time of delivery drew near, the brahmin suggested that he should strive hard to collect necessary provisions, which, he said, would take a long time, and that still it might not be a very easy job for him to collect costly things. The lady suggested an easier course which was to see the king and beg some money from him The brahmin agreed with her and started at once He took a few wild fruits with himself to make an offer to the king As he made the offer and stood before the king, the latter asked him who he was and what was the purpose of his coming The brahmin made his submission telling the king that he was poor and foolish too, that life had become unbearable to him for want of wealth, and that he had come to seek some financial assistance to meet the cost of his wife's delivery. The king took pity on him and ordered that he should supply him with wild flowers and take' two coins everyday. This generosity on the part of the king made life easy for the brahmin couple.

" 'Now, a war broke out between Kosambi and Champa, in which the former city was beseized The seize continued for months and meanwhile, the rains started. King Satanika closed the city gates and continued to fight from the ramparts, thus steadily reducing the enemy's columns. In the rains, it was a great problem for the king of Champa to maintain the supply line and so he withdrew a good part of his men, keeping a handpicked few to continue the seize. Seduka noticed this reduction in the enemy's strength and reported it to the king. Relying on this.

information, Satanika collected his men, took the enemy by surprise and routed the army of Champa. The king of Champa fled to save his life. Satanika celebrated the victory and made a triumphant entry into the city.

" 'Here was a turning point in Seduka's life. The king held a public reception for him and desired him to ask for any gift. The foolish fellow knew not what to ask and begged leave to consult his wife. To this the king agreed. The brahmin's wife was not keen for wealth. She was rather anxious to safeguard her own position with her man. She thought, the brahmin would get villages and wealth for the mere asking, and with affluence, he would lose his head and take another wife, or have concubines. If such a thing happened, that would lead to great misery for her. So she suggested that since the king was favourably disposed, all that the brahmin should seek was a comfortable life and free meals so that she herself would be liberated of the drudgery of her domestic work, and the two would be able to live happily The brahmin agreed and repeated his prayer as suggested by his wife adding that the household inviting him to dinner should give him a gold coin for that day. On hearing it, the king smiled and said, 'A real fool you are. You have asked for such trifles But nothing is lost yet. I give you another chance to formulate your prayer.' The brahmin said at once, 'If you want to give me anything, please give what I have asked for I seek nothing else. I do not want to entangle myself with villages and treasures. All I want are free meals and a daily gift of a gold coin.'

" 'The king at once issued a proclamation to that effect throughout the realm. Seduka became happy. He was going to new homes everyday and the kingdom was very big, and Seduka was hardly likely to take his meal twice from the same household in the course of his life. And

since the brahmin had earned the king's grace, everywhere he received a warm reception, good food and the gift of a coin. The brahmin was all praise for his lady's wit.

" 'Now, this free flow of wealth without effort increased the brahmin's greed and he thought that if he could take meal at several households everyday, he would earn several gold coins. At once, he gave effect to it. He would take meal at one household, come back home and vomit it out. Then he would go to another household and this he did several times everyday. His acquisition of gold coins multiplied like anything.

" 'With the growth of wealth, his family too became large. But the practice of swallowing food and vomiting it out several times per day made him sick and soon he developed signs of leprosy. His whole body from head to foot was covered with this ignominious disease and it emitted a foul smell which would extend over a distance But even in this state, he did not discontinue his visit to the court. At the minister's advice, the king asked the brahmin neither to come to the court nor to visit different homes, but to collect his daily food through his son. The brahmin agreed but reluctantly

" 'Thus his son replaced the father in collecting food. The attack of the disease was so virulent that even the members of his family now dreaded his presence and did not like to live with him under the same roof. So they erected a separate hut for him. The poor fellow now became an object of ridicule for everybody, including the members of his own family who freely talked of his behaviour in amassing a fortune. He got disgusted at last. One day, he called his sons and said, 'You see, my boys, I am fed up with life. The remaining days of my life I have decided to spend in some holy place. Do you agree ?' There was

no reason why the boys should not agree. They were happy to be freed from this burden. But Seduka desired that before setting out, he must sacrifice a goat not only for his own welfare but also for the prosperity and well-being of the family and he wanted to know if the sons were able and willing to arrange it. There was no reason why they should not.

" 'The plan thus satisfied both the parties, the sons because they would get rid of an ailing father who, in all probability, would never return, and the father because he had some vile plans in mind of which the pilgrimage was only a convenient camouflage. A goat was brought in and it was fed with some good green barley everyday so that it would put on flesh before it could be sacrificed. The goat was left in the leper's home and none had occasion to know that the leper, out of sheer malice for his own people, mixed up his own pus with the barley which the goat ate so that it became infected itself The sacrifice was arranged on an auspicious day and the goat's meat was served on everybody's plate. The leper then moved out.

" 'The leper reached a dense forest As he was wandering, he became thirsty Just then he saw a tank which had many trees and herbs all around it on its bank. In the scorching rays of the sun, the water boiled like decoction and had a bitter taste, but the leper was so thirsty that he drank a large quantity of water and lay down under a tree

" 'As he woke up, he found himself fairly cured. The wounds were not oozing as before and there was very much less pain. So he remained on the bank of the tank drainking water from it everyday, and taking bath in it. In a few days, he was fully recovered, and his skin became brighter than ever before. Now, the memory of his home came up, in his mind and he turned his steps homeward As he entered

into the city, the people were surprised to see him. Everywhere he was confronted with the same question · 'How did it happen ?', to which he repeated the same reply, 'In the forest, I propitiated the deity whose kindness has worked miracle on me'

' 'At his home, he found that everybody had fallen victim to the disease This was what he had desired and he felt very happy 'This is the outcome of your neglecting me,' said he The members of the family knew well how they got the infection from the goat's meat, and they censured the old man vehemently They turned him out of the house and when the people of the town came to know of it, they sent him into exile,

" 'Unfortunate man ! Seduka now sought the royal protection and was living outside the city with the chief guard At that time' continued the Lord, 'I came to the city and people came to hear my discourses Even the chief guard came, leaving Seduka to take his place At that time, a startling event took place Near the city gate there is a temple dedicated to the Goddess Navadurga who is propitiated for her power to fulfil the wishes of the people. A rich merchant who was childless came there one day and prayed for a son, for which he promised an offer of three precious gems But when he had acquired a son, he was not serious to fulfil his promise The goddess appeared in a dream and reminded him of his promise. When the merchant did not suitably respond, she went to the extent of threatening that she would kill his son. Now the merchant could no longer remain indifferent. In the morning, he bought three gems and reached the temple with the members of his family He placed the gems at the feet of the goddess but, shrewd as he was, he didn't even spare the goddess to give her a test of it. Said he, 'Mother goddess, I have made my offering, but as thy true devotee, I must now have a

share in it. So I partake one gem for myself, one for my wife and one for my son., So saying, he picked up all the three gems and departed.

" 'The goddess was disappointed. She had been deceived. She started thinking how to teach this man a suitable lesson. Just then, a more powerful deity, a *yaksa*, came to that place. The goddess narrated the whole story to him, when the *yaksa* burst out laughing. 'You are more fortunate, I must say. The fellw took out his own gems. But my experience is still worse' Then he started his own story which was as follows 'Once a merchant was on a voyage with a whole ship-load of cargo, when the ship got stuck against an invisible reef, of whose existence the merchant knew nothing, and inspite of the best efforts, the ship did not move. The merchant remembered me in desperation and promised me a buffalo if I could make the ship move forward. This I did, but after his safe return home, he simply forgot all about the promise. I gave him reminders and threatened him with drastic action. At last, the fellow procured a wild buffalo from the jungle and came to my temple with the members of his family, friends and relatives, and a band party. Then he placed a loop on the buffalo's neck and tied the other end of the rope with my image. He did not smite the animal, but dedicated it alive. Then, as the drums started beating, the wild buffalo got terrified and was on its heels, dragging my image with it. I was badly injured. Some people in the crowd were good enough to cut the rope and save me from a further drag. They restored my image on the pedestal. So, you see, goddess, it happens like that when you are in the clutches of a rogue. You are at least lucky that you did not yourself get hurt like me. Teach him a good lesson, if you can'

" 'What could the goddess do but wait for a chance. One day, she found the merchant's wife in the street, and she entered into her body. The lady at once started behav-

ing like a lunatic, talking irrelevantly all the time. The merchant became very anxious. All his efforts to cure her or give her some relief failed. At night, the goddess told the merchant in a dream that unless he made amends for his lapses, something even worse was in store for him. She asked him to bring for her a profuse offer of sweet and salted dishes if he cared for his wife's cure. The merchant did accordingly at day-break.

" 'Seduka noticed it all from a distance. As soon as the merchant had left, he came to the temple and started eating the offer made by the merchant. He could not check himself, but ate too much. But there was no water in the neighbourhood and he couldn't go far, since he was holding charge of the city portal In that state, he died and was born as a frog in a nearby well For, before dying, the fellow had thought how happy the aquatics were who always played and lived in water'

"But King Srenika's question had not yet been answered, and so the Lord started again, 'Once as I was at this place, the frog had heard of my presence from the ladies who came to the well, came out and was on its way to my camp to pay homage and obeisance But unfortunately it got crushed under the hoof of your own horse, oh Srenika But since he had started on a good cause, though he met with a tragic end, he has been born in heaven as a celestial being and is named Darduranaka Once he had heard Indra speaking in very eloquent terms about your equanimity, and so it was he who came down just now to have a test of it. What you saw as pus besmeared at my feet was really a very special variety of fragrant sandal paste. Since your own vision is enshrouded, you could not see it.'

" 'But, *bhante*, why did he use offensive language when you sneezed, though he was less offensive regarding others ?' What was its meaning ?'

"The Lord said, 'There's indeed a deep meaning behind what he said on each occasion. About me, he only expressed a curiosity why I continued to live on earth, though I have been liberated. He desired me, therefore, to terminate the last *karma* bondage (viz., bondage of name, lineage, life-span and suffering) and attain liberation. In desiring me death, he only heralded my victory over death

" 'And, *bhante*, why did he wish me a never-to-end life-span ?'

" 'He did so, because in this life, you are the master of all pleasures, and the longer this span of your life, the better for you, since hereafter your assignment to hell is a certainty'

" 'And, *bhante*, why did he place life and death at par for Abhayakumar ?'

" 'Because Abhayakumar is an intelligent man, and he has taken a good care of his next birth. In this life, as a chief minister, he commands wealth and affluence. So since both his states are equally good, it's immaterial for him if he lives in his present state or moves out to the next.

" 'And, *bhante*, how about the butcher ?'

" 'Well, it's a very simple thing His is a life devoted to animal slaughter, not a covetable profession by any means. He is, therefore, earmarked for hell where he would suffer terribly. So whether he is here, or in the other world, it's all the same to him

"The king felt perturbed to hear about his own fate. Said he,

'*Bhante*' ! When I am sheltered by no less a person than you, how is it that I am assigned to hell ?'

'Srenika ! One has to suffer from the outcome of his *karma*, both pious and impious. You already hold an acquisition of *karma* that must take you to hell. None can prevent it. But there's no reason for despair. After you

have passed through this infernal life, you will become the first *tirthankara* named Padmanabha in the next up-phase of the time-cycle.'

"Srenika was indeed hapy to know of his remote future, but this did not minimise his pain about the near future So he said,

'*Bhante*' Is it not possible to avert it by any chance ?'

" 'No, it can't be so. It is already fixed with thy fate. But there may be one chance of escape provided your maid named Kapila makes one devoted offer of food to a worthy monk, or provided the butcher named Kalasaukarika desists from slaughter for a day, or provided the merchant named Punyaka, who practises *samayika* very regularly, gives you the pious result of one *samayika*'.

"This held some hope for the king, who felt that these may not be very difficult to fulfil. He took leave of the Lord and was on his way back to the palace, when the same celestial being, Durduranaka, preceded him to take further tests of the king. He appeared as a heretical monk, who was plucking fruits from a tree on the bank of a tank, and collecting them at the corner of his robe Srenika came to the monk, took him aside and advised him to desist from deeds which were unbecoming of a monk.

"Hardly did the king go a few steps when he saw a nun of the order of the Jina who appeared to be pregnant. She had decorated her eye lashes with black paste, had her hairs finely arranged in a braid which was attractively dangling on her back. With two sons playing at her side, she was washing her hands and feet in the tank. This was a great shock for the king, who could not think of such a behaviour for a nun. So, in a very polite way, he pointed out to her the lapse, which would not only bring down her own soul, but would be a bad example for the whole order. But the

nun was not even ready to express a regret Instead, she said, 'I stand in no need of thy advice I am not alone in this sort of behaviour. You will hardly find in Mahavira's entire group of nuns anyone who indulges not in similar lapses. As an outsider, oh king, you see only such things as are openly visible, but as one belonging to the order, I know better what goes on inside. So, I wish you bother not about me or the order, but mind your own business.'

"But the king did not go He said to the nun, 'Nun! You have done something which is wholly wrong Now cover it not by implicating the entire order. The order is pure, I know. All monks and nuns are sincere to the sanctioned behaviour. It may be that due to the coming up of some impious *karma*, you have had a slip. But try to rectify. If you like, you may come with me, and, I assure you, I shall arrange for your delivery. After that, you return to the order and adhere to the code.'

"But the nun was no more, and the *deva* stood before the king, well-pleased at his steadfastness. So said the *deva*, 'Oh king! Thy equanimity is really worthy of praise. I adore thee and bow my head before thee What Indra had said about thee in tne assembly of celestial beings was no hyperbole. I am pleased. Ask for something.'

"King Srenika smiled and said, 'Nicely put, sire. But what shall I ask for? Is there anything on the earth which is not available to me?

"But the *deva* gave a divine necklace and two earthen balls to the king, saying, 'If the necklace breaks by any chance, then the man who repairs it dies at once' The *deva* disappeared. The king gave the necklace to Queen Chelana and the earthen balls to Queen Sunanda. Sunanda became furious. 'The necklace for the beloved queen, and the earthen balls for me. It's a great insult, What do I do

with these ?' She hurled them against the pillar and the two went into pieces. From one came out a pair of ear-rings, and from the other a divine cloth which even the gods would covet Sunanda became happy.

"Now, the thought of hell haunted the king like a nightmare. He sent for the maid, Kapila, and asked her to serve food with pure thought to some worthy monk. Kapila at once refused to do so. Srenika tried all inducements but the maid announced her firm determination not to do so even if the king awarded her as much gold as her own weight

"The king then sent for the butcher, Kalasaukarika, and said to him, 'Take as much wealth as you like, but slaughter not for one day the 500 buffaloes that you usually kill' Said the butcher, 'Sire, 'How can I agree to this absurd request ? This is my family profession. I can't give it up under any circumstance.' The king requested him, warned him with blood-shot eyes, but the fellow didn't agree. In a great rage, the king ordered that the butcher be thrown into a deep well, so that he would be prevented from his cruel deed.

"The king then turned to the third, the sravaka-merchant, Punyaka and begged for the worth of one ***samayika***. The merchant said,

'Sire' It is something which is not in my possession. How can I give you something which I possess not ?'

'With whom does it accumulate then ?' asked the king.

'With Lord Mahavira, sire !.'

"So, in the morning, the king came to the Lord and said, '***Bhante*** !' I have thrown Kalasaukarika into a deep well. He wont be able to slaughter anything from there. So, now, I think, I may escape hell. May I not ?'

"The Lord smiled and said, 'Your surmise is not correct,

Even inside the well, he has killed 500 earthen buffaloes to fulfil his routine. Though it may be symbolic, he has done it. So you can never escape.'

"The king listened with a feeling of surprise. From the Lord's assembly, he came to the well to verify if 500 earthen buffaloes had been killed, and they were there. 'Striking his forehead, he said,

'Alas ! My past *karma* haunts me. Never can it be otherwise from what the Lord has ordained.'

"If in the beginning Queen Sunanda was jealous of Queen Chelana for her necklaee, now the position was reversed and the first queen became jealous for her co-wife's acquisition of the rings and the cloth. So, when the king came to her, she said, 'Sire' You gave me only one necklace, but to Nanda, a pair of ear-rings and a piece of diving cloth. I do not understand how you could be so very pary partial as that. For all the best things in thy possession, I think, my claim should come first, as I am the first queen, the dearest to the monarch.'

"Srenika said, 'My dear ! To uphold the dignity of the position, I gave thee the costlier thing, the necklace, and to Nanda two earthen balls. But if the balls have yoelded precious things to her, how can I be blamed for that ?'

The queen retorted,

"But you can still get these for me. If you do not, it is not worth while for me to live. Sire ! 'You must note that.'

"The king was already fed up with the mutual jealousy of the two queens. So very coldldy he said, 'Do as it suits thee.'

"Now, Chelana thought of committing suicide. She reached the top of the palace and stood at an opening to jump from there. Just at that moment, she heard three people talking just beneath, which stopped her, and she stood listening to their conversation. So said a lady to

one man, 'To-day is the festival day. I want to put on the golden *champaka* necklace that you placed round the neck of the king's elephant. So I must have it. This is my long-cherished desire. If you do not fulfil it, I put an end to my life.'

"So said the man, 'This is an impossible request that you are making. The necklace is at the treasury, and if the king comes to know that I have taken it out for you, do you think I shall remain alive ? I cannot do that.'

"But the lady would listen to no argument. So the other man said, 'My friend ! One who listens not to sweet words, or understands not what is good to self or to another, needs be censured. There are occasions when softness does not work Then you must take strong steps I remember the story of a hermit who had collected some *palasa* seeds and sown them. The seeds duly sprouted and there grew up a fine tree. But unfortunately, the tree yielded no flower So he set fire to the tree and did not look at it again. One day he saw that the tree had not only revived but was full of flowers. This is also the nature of human beings. They respond not to sweet words, but to toughness. So, my friend, you should do the needful Even the world-monarch Brahmadatta did like that by following the advice of a mere goat.'

'How did it happen ?' asked the first man, The second man then warrated his story, 'Brahmadatta was the king of Kampilyapura. Once he was out on an excursion to the forest regions in the company of many horsemen. But somehow he was separated from them and was in the thickest part of the forest, Being tired, he sat beneath a tree. Later, his men joined and all of them returned to the city

" 'At night the queen said, 'Sire' What new thing(s) did you come across in the excursion ?' The king said, 'It was a nice experience After finishing my bath, as I sat on the

bank of a tank, I saw a Naga lass in the very prime of youth coming out of the water. She was tipsy. She came to me, but I curtly declined her company. At once, a Naga lad joined with her, and the two enjoyed under my very eyes in a rather shameless manner. I could no longer restrain myself, and right on the spot, I whipped both

"After finishing his story, the king came outside his apartment, where stood a *deva* ready to give him a boon The king knew not the cause of this unexpected favour So said the *deva*, 'I had come hither to kill thee, but thy words have opened my eyes.' But how, the king knew not. Revealing the facrs, the *deva* said, 'The lady that you saw at the tank is my wife. She has made allegations against you for having molested her chastity, and so I came to kill you. But I have heard from the window the account you gave to your wife, and this has convinced me of your honesty. You are a really worthy person, and it is a rare good luck to get a chance to honour one like you.'

" 'But I seek nothing, since I need nothing,' said the king But the *deva* was insistent and the king said, 'If you must give me something, then you give me the power to understand the dialect of the animals' 'Agreed,' said the *deva*, 'but keep it a secret. If you ever divulge it, you die at once.'

"Many days passed. One night, the king was in the company of the queen who was applying a sandal paste on the king's person When the application was over, there still remained a small quantity of the paste in the cup, This was noticed by a pair of lizards who were seated on the wall. The she-lizard said to her partner, 'Get me the paste so that I may rub it on my body and cool it.' 'You are a fool,' said the male-lizard. 'You are making an absurd request. I cannot honour it. Don't you see that as I go near the cup, I shall surely be caught and killed. Thc paste cannot be more valuable than my life.' But the she-lizard protested,

'I have never thought that you are such a coward. The weak have no right to live on this earth.'

"The king closely followed the dialogue and smiled. This did not escape the queen's eyes, who enquired about the cause of his smile, for which there was no visible occasion The king tried to change the topic, but the queen was insistent on a right reply The king said, 'If I tell you the truth, I die.' 'What a nice pretext for not coming out with the truth,' said the queen 'And is that they strength and manliness of which you boast ? I am your wife, so to say, your companion in life as in death. You should not hesitate to share your secret with me' The night passed like that

"In the morning, the king consulted with the minister, who said, 'Sire ! On the one side, the queen's curiosity, and on the other, your own life and also the welfare of the realm The matter is very serious and deserving of proper consideration Considering it from all angles, I feel, you overlook the request of the queen.'

"The king was in a dilemma What the minister had said was right, and yet he could not just overrule the queen, who was so loving and devoted. Ultimately, the king made up his mind 'I must fulfil the queen's wishes, come what may A lady who has declared herself to be a companion at death cannot be overruled Minister ! You prepare a pyre for me' What could the poor minister do but to honour the wishes of the king ?

"A pyre was lit and the king got ready There was a vast crowd of ministers, other dignitaries of the state and citizens Their eyes were full of tears.

"Now, it is a common experience that appropriate words uttered at the right moment do not miss the target. As the pyre was lit and the king was about to share his secret with the queen, a cart carrying barley rolled down the

street, followed by two goats. The she-goat wanted to eat some barley and asked the he-goat to get it for her from the cart But the he-goat dared not, since it was a royal cart carrying barley for the king's stable. Said the he-goat, 'Do you take me to be King Brahmadatta that I put my life at risk to fulfil a flimsy desire of yours ?' The she.goat said, You are cruel You know not the heart Where heart is involved, both life and death become secondary. If a world-monarch like Brahmadatta is going to lay down his life for the sake of the lady, you cannot just call him a fool. Rather, you should emulate his noble example ' To this the he-goat retorted, 'Who can be a greater fool that one who is blinded by a woman ? Brahmadatta may be a world-monarch, but he is not above lapses It is the greatest folly on his part to sacrifice his life for the sake of a lady's arrogance.'

"The king heard the goat's words and at once changed his mind. He removed his mouth from the queen's ears and moved away from the pyre. He returned to his apartment and acknowledged the he-goat as his spiritual master. The pair was brought to the palace The king placed garlands on them and fed them sweet barley with his own hands. The queen was given lashes for repeating her curiosity."

"Giving a sharp edge to his words, the second man said to the first, 'Whipping is the best cure for an arrogant woman who is not amenable to reason, as monarch Brahmadatta administered to his queen '

"This was enough for the lady who insisted no more on getting the necklace. This was also enough to pacify Queen Chelana who did no more wish to end her life, but lived on peacefully.

"Queen Chelana used to put on the necklace everyday. One day somehow it broke down and the queen was very sad. It would be difficult to get it repaired ; for, anyone doing it would die. So, it would be difficult to find anyone who would be ready to take up the repair. Yet a proclama-

tion went round announcing the offer of a large cash reward to anyone who would repair it, but none responded in view of the severe condition attached to this work.

"There was, however, an old and intelligent goldsmith who was very poor He had four sons Old as he was, he thought of shouldering the risk and sacrificing his life for the sake of improving the financial condition of the family. When he was brought to the king, the latter gave him the necklace for purposes of repair, and fifty per cent of the award, with a promise to pay the remainder on the successful completion of the work

"The goldsmith returned home He tried his best to repair it but could not It became a stupendous problem for him, and he was anxious throughout the day and night devising ways to pass the thread through the eyes in the stones. At last, he hit upon a device which was to dip the thread end in honey and place it on the ground. This worked well. An ant came there, picked up the thread end and passed with it through the eyes of the stones. When the whole thing was done, the goldsmith picked up the two ends of the thread and tied them together. But no sooner was the work done than his head cracked and he fell dead He was born as a monkey in a nearby orchard.

"The sons of the dead smith brought the necklace to the king and asked for the remaining portion of the reward. The repair was so flawless that the king was happy, but he declined to make the payment on the plea that the fellow who had repaired it was dead and that the sons were not entitled to the payment. The king's words pained the sons, but what could they do against the king? They had now a two-fold cause for grief, viz., that they lost their father and that they did not get the full reward.

"Now, one day, the monkey came by chance to his former house and his memory at once revived. He became inquisitive to know if the king had paid the remaining portion of

the reward, and when he came to know that the king had played false, he was very much pained. He returned to the forest and started thinking on a plan to teach the king a good leason. He was now hovering near the palace looking for a chance when he could remove the necklace "One day, Queen Chelana came to the *asoka* park and entered into the tank to enjoy some water sports. The necklace and other ornaments were left on the bank in the custody of a maid who held them in a saucer on her head. The monkey saw it and it was his best chance He came down to the lowest branch of the tree and picked up the necklace, none, not even the maid, knowing anything about it. At once, he came to his sons and passed the necklace on to them, who hid it carefully.

"When the queen came out of the water and started wearing the ornaments, she did not find her necklace. She asked the maid but the poor woman was ignorant about it. She was trembling with fear. The queen did not take time to understand that this was not the maid's doing but there was some deeper cause behind it. She came to the palace and reported the matter to the king , and the king at once asked the minister, Abhayakumar, to find it out and arrest the thief, which the latter agreed to complete in a week's time.

"The minister at once ordered a thorough search of the city but the necklace could not be found anywhere. Then a proclamation went round to the effect that anyone who had it would go unpunished if he himself surrendered it, but would get a death penalty, if detected. The proclamation made the smith's sons very anxious They knew well that it would be very difficult to hide the necklace, and they dared not to come to the palace to surrender it So they returned it to the monkey, who carried it away to the forest.

"With the necklace in his possession, he spent the whole day in the hollow of a tree, After sun-set, he came to a park near a *yaksa* temple, sat on a tree and started

thinking as to what to do with the precious thing. At that time, Acharya Suhasti, with his five disciples was seated in the temple. The Acharya thought of spending the night in *kayotsarga*, for which, by chance, he stood beneath the same tree on which sat the monkey, and was soon lost in meditation. The monkey considered him to be a worthy person, and so he placed the necklace round his neck and felt relieved.

"That day happened to be particularly auspicious for the practice of austerities, and so Minister Abhayakumar, himself a devout *sravaka*, was in the temple practising some in the company of the monks Now, at the end of the first quarter, Monk Siva, who was attending the Acharya in his meditation, came back to the temple when the following words suddenly came out of his mouth, '*Fear exists*', instead of the usual '*Everything okay*' on such occasions. When Abhayakumar heard this, he said, 'What fear for a monk, *bhante* ? "The monk said, 'Yes, for the monk there is no fear. But when I was in the household order, once I had it, It was the memory of it that was up just now.' 'But, *bhante*, what was that fear in your life as a house-holder ?' Siva started

"In the great city of Ujjain, there lived two brothers, (myself) Siva and Datta, who were poor One day, they decided to go to Saurashtra to earn and the two set out But luck did not favour them in their first profession and they changed it, Datta taking to farming and Siva proceeding to another city with merchandise At night, as Siva was proceeding, he saw from a distance four merchants beneath a banyan tree, who appeared to be strangers from another land He started watching their behaviour, Suddenly he saw a golden man, no bigger than a hand and a half, who jumped down from the banyan tree and started to run. The four merchants ran after him The golden man said, '*Wealth is the source of all evils*,' but these four-

didn't care for what he said They soon caught him, fixed him on the ground and sat down encircling him. In the morning, two of them went to the market to get some food, and the remaining two were left behind to keep watch on the golden man.

"The reflection of ideas, good as well as bad, cannot but fall on others. The two who had gone to the town thought that if they could kill the other two, then there would be only two claimants for the golden man, and they would surely be richer So they put the idea into action They ate themselves, but mixed strong poison in the food they bought for their companions.

"The two merchants who were left behind had also similar ideas, and as soon as the two returned from the market, they killed them at once. But as they had no meal during the night and were very hungry, they sat down at once to eat and took the poisoned food These two also joined the former two in their journey to the other world

"As there was none now to claim the golden man, Siva picked him up, despite the fact that his words, uttered as a warning, were still ringing in his ears, '*Wealth is the source of all evils*' But the pull of temptation was very great within him which he could scarcely resist. He came back to Datta who was still employed in hard labour on his farm. He told him of his recent acquisition, which, he said, would give a turn to their fortune, and the two started back for their own city.

"As the two were on their way home, an evil thought haunted Siva which was that the golden man was his own and that he had made a mistake in agreeing to share it with his brother. So he thought of killing him. Simultaneously, the same thought came to Datta also, and both were looking for a chance to execute the design They had now reached the neighbourhood of their own city.

"But if bad thoughts come up with a vehemence, they may move out also with a vehemence. Siva took out the golden man and threw it in the tank. Datta was startled as he saw this, but when Siva revealed his mental state, Datta said, 'You have done a right thing In my mind too, a similar idea was creeping in '

"The golden man was swallowed by a fish which was in turn caught by a fisherman. As the fish, with the golden man in its belly, had a great weight, it fetched him a good price And who bought the fish ? Well, it was bought by the mother of Siva and Datta who had organised a banquet to celebrate the home-coming of her dear boys She gave the fish to her daughter to prepare a good curry out of it As the daughter cut the fish, came out the golden man and she at once hid it in her arm-pit. But the mother noticed it and she enquired what it was The girl would not divulge the secret The two started arguing and soon came to blows In the tussle that followed, the golden man dropped down from the arm-pit right on the mother's head killing the poor lady on the spot When the two brothers heard the noise, they rushed to the spot They saw the golden man lying on one side, and the dead mother on the other, and the sister stood in confusion How true the golden man's words had proved to be ! The two brothers renounced the world and joined the holy order of monks Here am I '

"Concluding his observation, monk Siva told Abhayakumar 'In the household order, I had experienced fear because of possession, and the memory of it came up just now So I said, *Fear exists* '

"At the end of the second quarter, when monk Subrata came back after attending the Acharya, there came out from his lips the following words '*Great Fear*.' Abhayakumar repeated a similar enquiry, when the monk narrated his own account of the experience he had in the household order, which was as follows ·

"In Angadesa, during the reign of King Jitasatru, Subrata (myself) lived in a village named Sangrama. He was both popular and wealthy, well-behaved and well-disposed to others. His wife's name was Priyamitra, who was a lady of no very high morals, but the husband knew it not. Once a band of robbers looted the village. Somehow, Subrata moved out and saved his life. But Priyamitra did not move out. She put on her best clothes and ornaments and sat in the open courtyard. As the robbers came and looted the house, she requested them to carry her too, which they gladly did, since she was beautiful. She was taken to the robber chief who accepted her as his concubine.

"After the robbers had gone, everybody returned to check their houses. Subrata also did the same. But, in his own case, he found that both his wealth and wife were missing So he started a search for his wife and at last reached the robbers' den. He spent the night in the house of an old lady who used to make earthen pots. It was through her good offices that he came to know all about his wife, who was discovered in the chief s den. When she told the lady of her husband's arrival in search of her, she expressed an apparent joy and said, 'It's very nice of him. To-night, as the chief goes out on his daily business, let him come here. I shall go out with him.' Subrata was happy to get the report, the more so to think that the recovery would be so easy. He reached the chief's den at the appointed hour, and was received and fed by the lady. But as ill-luck would have it, the robber did not proceed on business that night since he saw some very inauspicious omens on the way, and so he returned at an unexpected hour. The lady at once put her husband beneath the cot.

"After the dinner, as the lady sat on the same couch in the company of the chief, she said, 'Sir, if by any chance

my husband comes here in search of me, how will you behave towatds him ?' 'Why ? I shall give bim a warm reception, and hand you over to him' The chief didn't understand what the lady had really in mind, and he knew pretty well that there was no chance of her husband's ever reaching that den. The lady, however, relished not the words of the chief She cast very angry look at the chief, which at once put that fellow to proper form 'I was just joking,' said he 'It he comes within my view, goes he not alive.' This pleased the lady very much, and she pointed significanty beneath the cot The chief understood at once and dragged the man out, tied him with a leather strap, bit him half-dead, and hurled him into a deep ditch outside

"Continuing the monk said, 'Imagine, how much pain, both physical and mental, poor Subrata had on the occasion, but he was helpless. For a long time, he lay in that state, and perhaps would have been finished, but for the arrival of a dog, who started eating the leather strap This restored him his liberty and he recovered to some extent. He got up and came again to the chief's den. The chiet was fast as leep Subrata held a naked sword, and signalled his wife to come out at once, on pain of being cut into two in case she disobeyed She had no time to think and silently followed her man But she was not penitent for what she had so far done and was still keen for the robber to whom she would go if she could As she ran with her man, she dropped pieces of her own cloth on the way for the guidance of the robber in case he pursued the fugitives, and this was not noticed by her man. As the night was nearing its end, the two hid themselves in a bamboo grove in order to escape being noticed and caught

" 'In the morning, when the robber noticed that the lady had disappeared, he started at once with his men, following the foot-prints, and the pieces of cloth dropped by her. The whole group now reached the grove. They

"If he comes within my view, goes he not alive."

snatched away the lady and inflicted on the man the bitterest torture, nailing his hands and feet. He lay there helpless and extremely pained. A monkey took pity on him. He brought some water on a lotus leaf for him to drink, took out the nails, applied some healing potion and helped him to cure.

" 'This raised a curiosity in the man's mind as to why the monkey took all the trouble to cure him which even a human being would rarely do. He understood the man's thought and said, 'Lucky man ! Don't you recognise me ? I was your neighbour in your previous birth, a druggist, Siddha by name. I died of *arta dhyana* and am born in this animal form. As I saw you, my long memory revived, and I recognised you at once'

" 'Subrata was happy to hear these words from the monkey. He conveyed his gratitude to him and said, 'You have rendered me a great service and saved my life. What can I do for you ?' These words brought tears in the monkey's eyes Said he, 'You can do a lot for me, In this forest, I was living in the company of 500 she-monkeys. But a powerful monkey has come and ousted me from my position. He is now the master of the whole group. I have been rendered useless. If you kindly help me, I can regain my previous position.'

" 'Subrata started at once. As he saw the rival monkey, he killed him with his sword. His benefactor thus regained his ladies. But he could not forget his own wife who was still with the robber. Even the thought of it greatly afflicted him. He thought out a plan again and turned his steps towards the den. He found the chief lying asleep and he cut him into two at one stroke. Thus he regained his wife at last. But as he was returning with her, he saw a monk in *kayotsarga* posture. He sat at his feet. When the meditation was over, the monk spoke some

holy words which brought about a change in him and he acquired now, not the worldly life and a lost wife, but something more, his own spirit. He renounced everything just then and joined the holy order. So you see me here Well, you see, just now my whole past had come up in my mind, and so came out the words, *Great Fear*.'

"At the end of the third quarter came bach monk Joyana, uttering *Extreme Fear*, and he too, on the request from Abhayakumar, gave the following account of his own experience :

" 'Joyana, the householder was married to a merchant's daughter in the city of Ujjain One day, he started to bring his bride from her parental home He held a sword in his hand As the sun was already down, he didn't enter into the city but remained outside it. In the neighbourhood, there was a cremation ground, and he heard a pitiful wail coming from that direction. Apparently, it signified a lady to be in difficulty. Joyana went thither to see a man placed on a sharp sword. The lady who stood just beneath revealed to him that the man was her own husband punished by the king for no fault and that she was there to feed the man. But as the man was placed too high, she begged ro be helped to reach him. It was a very painful sight which Joyana could no longer bear. But he offered his shoulders for the lady's use, on which the lady agreed to stand on condition that the man did not look upward, to which he assented.

" 'Now the lady was on the man's shoulders. Very soon, he heard her chewing something and then few pieces of meat rolled down his own body. He got terrified and looked up to see the devil cutting pieces of flesh from the poor man's body with a sharp knife and devouring them with the greatest relish. At once, he dropped her and rushed towards the city, but the devil pursued him and caught him just near the city portal, cutting a big lump of flesh from his thigh. Joyana fell down. Soon a crowd

gathered and people advised him to go to the Durga temple which he did with the greatest difficulty. The goddess expressed sympathy for him and told him that the whole region outside the city wall was haunted by spirits. But being a stranger to the city, Joyana was ignorant of this. The goddess placed her hand on his wound and he felt considerably relieved.

At last he reached his father-in-law's house where the door was latched from inside. He stood outside for a while, as two ladies were in conversation The man had a feeling that they must be his own wife and her mother. The mother said to the daughter, 'The meat that ye fetched today was very tasteful and delicious Pray, whose meat was that ?' 'Tasteful it must be, 'said the daughter, 'since it was from the person of thy own son-in-law.' So saying, the lady narrated the entire chain of events which Joyana had himself gone through When he came to know that the lady who had cut his flesh was his own wife, the prospect of his life with her suddenly opened before his eyes, and he renounced the world at once and joined the holy order of monks Here am I Well, at this moment, the memory of the entire past had come up and so did I say, without any effort, so to speak, *Extreme Fear*.

"At the end of the fourth quarter returned monk Dhannya and spoke out, *Fear*, *Extreme Fear* and on being questioned, he gave the following accout of his past at the request of Abhayakumar

" 'Dhannya was the son of a merchant named Sudhana who lived in the city of Ujjain during the reign of King Ajitasena He was married to a lady named Shrimati who was devoted and loving. Dhannya was so fond of her that he never denied her anything One day, he found her depressed and enquired about the cause of it, but the lady would say nothing. But when he was insistent, she said, I want to eat the meat of a musk deer.' Where do I got

that ?' The wife became very grave and said, 'The place is far off, and difficult to reach. Besides, it will take a a very long time to reach there and return. I can't bear the pang of this long separation.' But Dhannya was so infatuated in his love for her that to him the idea of declining the lady's request was wholly repugnant. So he decided to go at once, regardless of the strain and difficulty of the journey. But, to be very clear about the exact place where to find the deer, he made a further enquiry from the lady, who said that it would be available in King Srenika's palace-garden, where it had been procured from some distant land

" 'Dhannya reached Rajagriha As he was taking rest under a tree in a public park, he saw a harlot coming there with many attendants. Just then, a flying *Vidyadhara* saw her and lifted her up. There was an uproar at once. Dhannya shot an arrow, which hit the poor fellow, who fell on the ground. The lady fell into a tank. Dhannya helped her out and thus saved her life Henceforth, she became extremely friendly towards him and took him to her own abode. She enquired about the purpose of his arrival to the metropolis when Dhannya told her everything

" 'A woman knows much quicker another of her own sex than a man can do From the few words that Dhannya spoke about his wife, she had a fairly complete picture of her. 'Sir ! said she. Excuse my garrulity, but the lady for whom you are about to put yourself to the greatest risk and danger is not really devoted to you. To be very frank, you know not much about her.'

" 'This was a shock to Dhannya who protested. 'There's none on this earth as devoted as my own wife. So please repeat not thy assessment. of her any more.'

" 'That day, the lady was scheduled to dance at the palace, and she took her guest, Dhannya, with her. All people were absorbed in the performanee. The musk deer was

visible from there, roaming in the neighbourhood. This was Dhannya's chance. He killed it. But luck proved otheswise, and he was caught and chained. The guards waited for the performance to be over, so that they would receive the king's order about the culprit.

" 'While still dancing, the lady saw that her guest had been caught When the dance was over, the king made her an offer of three things, for one of which she sought her guest's life. For, meanwhile, he had been condemned to death for having slaughtered the royal musk deer Dhannya was thus saved from the jaws of death.

" 'As Dhannya was now preparing to return, the lady started with him. She remained in the park, while Dhannya proceeded to his home to watch his wife from hiding. He stood in a corner in the house covered by darkness. At about midnight, there came a man to Shrimati and they were together for a long time, enjoying in all postures. When they were exhausted, they fell asleep. At this moment, Dhannya took out his sword and cut the man very silently. Then he fled. When later the lady got up and saw the man dead beside her, to avoid public notice, she dug a grave in a corner of the courtyard and buried the man.

" 'Dhannya and the lady returned to Rajagriha since he had no more inclination to live with an unfaithful wife. Many days passed like this His weakness for his own wife, however come up once again and he returned to her, who received him well, forgetting not to mention about the long separation which, Dhannya said, had really become unavoidable.He regretted that he could not find the musk deer.

" 'Dhannya noticed that as soon as food was cooked everyday, before it was served, the lady would take out a portion and place it on the grave, This showed that she was still devoted to the dead man. So, one day, he asked her

to prepare some special dish for him and forbade her to make the offering. But the lady soon found a pretext. She announced that the first preparation was all spoiled on the oven and deposited the whole stuff on the grave, Dhannya at once took her to task. But the lady was undaunted and she hurled the cauldron-full of boiling oil on his body, burning him severely. Dhannya left the house at once and returned to his parents, whose care and affection cured him Now, he felt, he had seen enough of the world and it was time for him to renounce. This he did and joined the holy order, Here I am. But just now the memory of the past had come up and so did I say, ***Fear, Extreme Fear***

"The sun rose in the east and Abhayakumar was now preparing to depart. He came to take leave of the Acharya and pay him homage, when he saw the queen's necklace round his neck. Now he realised why all the four monks had sensed different degrees of '***fear***' at different quarters of the night, but he had no doubt in the Acharya's innocence. The necklace was on his neck by some chance. He picked it up from the Acharya's neck and restored it to the king

"So, Kunchika, you should understand that a ***sramana*** free from all greed does not even look at another man's wealth, what to speak of usurping it You are unnecessarily laying the blame on me.'

"What you say, sir, is true of the ***sramanas*** They are free from greed and attachment But you appear to be far apart from them, and so you have been tempted by my wealth. Your temptation has not been less than that of the legendary lion'

"What lion ? Who was he ? What was his conduct ?" The merchant then started the story of the lion.

"King Jitasatru had a physician named Devadatta who had two sons, Jivananda and Kesava ; but the father had no

affection for them Now, it so happened that the physician had grown old and was replaced by another. This reduced his prestige add affluence and the family became poor. One day, as the new physician was going out on horse back attended by the royal guards, Manorama, the wife of the retired physician saw him and remembered the days when her own family stood in the king's grace She began to weep When her boys asked her the cause of her tears, she told them the cause of her grief, concluding, 'My sons ! You didn't learn medicine Otherwise, you could have occupied your father's position' Both Jivananda and Kesava said, 'Mother ! Tell us of a person who may train us up in medicine We assure you, we shall work hard and learn all about it' The mother said, 'There's none in this city who may be of much use to you So, I suggest, you go to Champa, where you have your father's friend, Jnanagarva, who may be of help to you'

"The boys did accordingly and by dint of hard labour, soon became experts in medicine Now, they were on their way home In the way, they saw a lion who was blind The elder brother said to the younger, 'Let us apply our knowledge and cure this lion We should help him' The younger brother did not agree 'Your compassion is misplaced,' said he 'It may be worthwhile to help men, but not surely ferocious animals who have no appreciation and gratitude and who harm you instead' But the elder brother did not agree, and threw some powder in the lion's eyes and cured him at once, As a measure of safety, the younger brother was already on the tree Now, the lion was starving for many days As soon as he regained his sight, he extended his paws at Jivananda, caught him between them and satisfied his hunger Kesava, very sad at the loss of his brother, returned home with a heavy heart

"So, you see, oh monk," said Kunchika, 'as the lion

behaved towards his benefactor, so you have done towards me."

The monk ptotcsted,

"A monk never forgets the good done to him. He is even good to his malefactors To do good to others is a part of him. So it is never possible that a monk does harm to others. He does good to others not only when he is alive, but he continues to do so, as did Metarya, even after he was liberated from this body."

Kunchika asked, 'Oh monk ! Who was this Metarya who continued to do good to others even after he was liberated of this mortal frame ?

Monk Munipati started his account

"There lived one Mehara who belonged to a lowly caste in the city of Rajagriha Meti was the name of his wife. The couple lived a happy life. In the same city, there lived a wealthy man, a ***seth***, and Meti was a regular visitor to his house. The visits were so frequent that despite a wide social gap, there grew an intimacy between Meti and the ***seth's*** wife They spent hours in the company of each other, and they never hesitated to open their hearts.

"Women have a dominant urge to acquire motherhood. They are so keen to bring forth progeny that any obstacle to that is unbearable to them The ***seth's*** wife had undergone pregnancy several times, but as ill-luck prevailed, on each occasion. she gave birth to a dead child. In consequence, there was no child alive to make the house cheerful, a great tragedy for the family. One day, the lady shared her grief with Meti Meti felt compassion for her friend and said, 'If ever we are pregnant about the same time, we shall exchange our offsprings so that the world at large will know that the living child is your own.'

"The suggestion appealed very much to the ***seth's*** wife, and she started looking into the future with great keenness.

By sheer chance, the two ladies were pregnant about the same time. Meti gave birth to a male child and the *seth's* wife as usual to a dead one. As per her previous commitment, Meti passed on her child to the *seth's* wife, to the latter's immense joy. She celebrated the occasion with great pomp and festivity. The boy was named Metarya.

"Metarya was now sixteen years old. He acquired many arts. Preparations were then set afoot for his marriage. He was betrothed to eight beautiful damsels from well-to do business families. A suitable date was fixed for wedding. Just a day before the wedding, a friendly god came to him and said, 'Why are you getting entangled in mundane life? You can very well adopt the path of renunciation. But once you step in into the mundane life, it will be no easy job for you to get out of it.'

"For one who has fascination for worldly life no counsel would strike root. He has his gaze fixed on it, and he never turns away from it. So the words of the god did not appeal to Metarya, and he said in reply, 'Sir, how do you think I can be indifferent to worldly life till I have known what worldly joys are. So please do not stand in my way.' Thus Metarya refused the god's suggestion in most unmistakable terms. But the god was not prepared to accept defeat. He started thinking about some alternative stratagem.

"The god decided to make use of Meti on the wedding day. He effected a necessary change in her mind. On the appointed day, as preparations were being made for the wedding, Meti suddenly broke in and made every thing topsy-turvy. She started shouting, 'The boy is mine. I carried him in my womb. I gave birth to him. I shall settle him in marriage wherever I please.' So saying, to the surprise of everybody, she dragged Metarya to her own home.

"Metarya was now in the home of his low-caste parents when the god came again and repeated his request. Metarya was this time in tears. Said he. 'If you are really my friend, as you say, then why did you stand in the way of my happiness and humiliate me ?'

"Said the god,

'Why did you decline my suggestion ? I showed you the way to bliss. The world is an empty place Ideal is the life of a monk. Turn your step towards this life.'

"But Metarya was not ready. Said he,

'Sir, your suggestion is devoid of content to me till I have known the worldly life. It may be good, bad or anything, I do not know. I must apprehend it first before I decide to give it up.'

"Continuing he said,

'You have deprived me of something which was ready for me You have harmed me and humiliated me How can I survive so much ? If you sincerely desire me to step towards renunciation, you should remedy the two-fold harm done to me. I insist that the *seth* should reaccept me as his son and that King Srenika should give his daughter in marriage to me. If, to start with, these two conditions are fulfilled, then I agree to renounce the world and join the order of monks, But till this two-fold harm done to me is duly repaired, I shall remain downcast and depressed and shall never be mentally prepared for the path of renunciation.'

"These words created an impression on the god who agreed to set the thing right. He tied a divine goat at his cottage and this animal gave forth a large quantity of precious gems everyday. At the god's suggestion, Mehar carried these gems in a saucer as a gift to King Srenika. This he did for three days to the surprise of all present at the court. On the third day, the chief minister, Abhaya-

kumar, could hold no more and enquired about the source of such precious gifts which appeared to be divine At this, Mehar gave a complete account of the goat. This made Abhayakumar all the more curious about the motive of the man, and he asked him flatly about it Mehar was a sharp-witted man and was never to be taken aback He said, 'Sir, we have acquired this divine goat from a god who is friendly to my son, and we get these precious things in profuse quantity from the goat. So sir, you can see how lucky my son is If, for such a worthy son, I seek the hand of the princess royal, I hope I shall not be asking for too much, I hope, you see my point and you will readily oblige me.'

"The proposal was at once rejected by the king What an audacity on the part of this low-born ! But Abhayakumar was an intelligent man He picked up the thread from where it was broken and said, You see, we need more time to consider your request, but before that, we must see this divine goat with our own eyes Besides, I hope, you agree, that such a rare thing should belong to the king'

"Mehar agreed and the very next day, the goat was at the palace But this change of habitation also changed the goat and he stopped producing the precious gems But Abhayakumar had no doubt that there was some mystery behind the whole thing and that that must be revealed So he said to Mehar, 'If a god is friendly to your son, let him help us too That will convince us about the great connections of your son' Mehar agreed Continued the Chief Minister, Abhayakumar, 'You see the rampart around this city of Rajagriha Let this rampart be turned into gold, It is also necessary to build a bridge-link between Svarnagiri and Vaibharagiri. It is further necessary that water is fetched from the Ganga, the Jamuna, the Saraswati and the Milk Ocean (Ksira-samudra) and sprinkled on your son Get these done as early as you can, and the princess will be his'

"But great is the power of a god, and the things asked for were no bigger than a trifle. All these things were done to the full satisfaction of everybody The boy was dipped in the holy water brought from the four sources, and the princess was duly married with him. The other eight girls who were already betrothed were also married to him. With the position changed, it was no longer difficult for Metarya to regain acceptance in the *seth's* family. The young man was now happy in the company of his nine wives.

"But the god was alive to his mission When he found that Metarya was deeply engrossed in conjugal life, he gave him a reminder to attract him towards renunciation. Said Metarya to the god, 'Sir, is it enough that you have settled me in a married life? If I am not permitted to see through this life, then why did you settle me in it? Besides, you should have consideration for these ladies too. So please don't talk about renunciation at this time'

"The god saw reason in these words and yielded But he fixed a limit of 12 years after which, he said, he would come again To this Metarya agreed

"Now, this limit of 12 years was nearing its end. The god came again. But this gave a great shock to Metarya who did not want to disturb the even tenor of his married life But the god would not agree So he humbly begged to be spared for another 12 years and the god could not but concede. Metarya was again immersed in the pleasures of life He belonged to an affluent family and he got anything for the asking To him now this was the essence of worldly life, and he had the very best of it. Soon he forgot all about his promise to the god. But the god did not forget. He came back in time. Metarya was surprised and sad. He was in no mood to renounce, but this time the god was detemined to push him out. He issued

forth a stern warning that if he was not yet prepared to move out, he must get ready to face immense difficulties So, with great reluctance, Metarya gave up the life of a householder and courted the life of a monk.

"Although Metarya had put on the monk's white robe, he was not mentally prepared for it At times, he blamed the god and at times, he blamed his own ill-luck A deep lust for life always pulled him back and blocked his way to penance and restraint He observed that his fellow monks happily moved from village to village and lived in an environment of total detachment. What to speak of enjoying physical comforts, the monks lived far away from them They were always immersed in studies, meditation, penance and philosophical discussions Metarya observed all this everyday. He was now by force a part of this austere environment and he had no courage to express his dissent or disapproval of it to anyone. But slowly he began to change and was swallowed up by this new environment He started realising that he had too great a craving for life but that his fellow monks were free from this craving They had no attachment and they did not seek physical comfort Penance was their perpetual pleasure, restraint was their constant companion. Their area of contentment was very wide In contrast with them, he always felt small,

"Censure has its positive aspect, Metarya felt a great change overtaking him He was now firmly rooted in the life of a monk A way forced on him now became a part of him. He limited his requirements and his attachment slowly changed into *ahimsa* Many years passed in this way. During these years, Metarya mastered the scriptures and practised many severe penances Due to extreme hardship, his body became lean and emaciated. In the proportion his physical power went down, his spiritual power grew brighter and this power was reflected in his deeds

"In the course of his wanderings, one day, Metarya arrived at Rajagriha There he practised a long fast for 30 days. On its successful completion, he rose to beg food to break this fast. He arrived at the residence of a gold-smith The gold-smith was a great expert in his profession and he was widely known for his skill. He was also the smith to King Srenika. On the day the monk arrived, the gold-smith was working on a necklace for the king The speciality of this necklace was that it was made of golden beads of the size and shape of ripe barley. The beads looked so real When the smith saw the monk coming towards his shop, he got up to receive him, and then he moved inside to fetch food for the monk. This was a chance for a *krauncha* bird who had been observing these beads for quite some time and had a temptation for this fresh barley. The bird came down, picked up the necklace and swallowed it. Then it flew back before the smith returned and perched on the same branch of the tree as before. Monk Metarya saw all this happening.

"When the gold-smith came back with the food for the monk, he was surprised to find that there was no necklace there He was totally upset He was committed to deliver it that very day to the king He looked around but there was none in the neighbourhood whom he could suspect. So he had a feeling that the necklace must have been picked up by the monk. As he put it to the monk, he got no reply. The monk stood silent. What to speak of uttering a word, the monk did not as much drop a hint or make a gesture that the necklace had been swallowed up by the bird. By now, the gold-smith had exhausted all his patience and he showered all sorts of abuses on the monk. But when he found that these had no more effect on the monk, he lost control of himself and tied a raw hide round the monk's face and pushed him in the sun. As the hide became dry, it contracted and pressed all around his face. The monk felt a

great suffocation, but he stood firm and calm He did not allow his mind to sway or swerve in any direction, and he cherished no ill-feeling towards the gold-smith. But he could bear no more and fell down dead on the ground

"Meanwhile, the bird could not keep the necklace in its belly. It was already having a great pain It could no longer remain on the branch of the tree and dropped down with a crash This evoked a pitiable sound and attracted the smith's attention. By that time, the bird's belly had burst and came out from within it the golden necklace which had been missing This opened the smith's eyes, and he could see the reality He was now extremely sorry for all that he had done to the monk and he had only remorse in store for him He rushed back to the monk and as he observed him keenly, he saw that he was none other than Srenika's own son-in-law He was now not only sorry but nervous too, and he had no doubt that his own life on this earth was now only a question of time The king's men would soon find the culprit and he would have to pay with his own life. So he must get ready to quit. He could see no way to save himself. But, thought he, if the monk was generous enough to save the bird by not pointing to it as the real thief, he felt, his own safety too lay in the same hands, even though the monk was no more in his mortal frame. So he bowed before the monk's body, removed his robes and put them on himself.

'The news of the monk s death took no time to spread all over the metropolis The people were shocked to hear of this mysterious tragedy and demanded a severe punishment for the wrong doer Particularly grieved was the king who had lost such a worthy kin. He ordered his men to produce the murderer before him. The gold-smith in the garb of a monk was at once produced before the king But this was a dilemma A murderer but a monk ! A monk

was above all punishments as per the convention of the state. So the king ordered that so along as the fellow was in the monk's robe, he should not be touched, but that the moment he gave it up, the law would take its own course.

"This was a new situation for the gold-smith. He did not really want to be in white clothes for all times, but had used them as an expediency to save himself from an imminent danger. But now the position was that he could no longer give them up and he would do so at the cost of his own life. Thus wavering between attachment and renunciation, he at least threw his lot in favour of the latter He came to the monks and joined their order He developed a taste for this new life, lived it successfully and was in the end liberated like Metarya"

On the completion of his account, Kunchika said,

"I agree that Monk Metarya was a magnificent personality and he was free from all greed. But you are a different type. I have my reservations about you and I have a feeling that you are a wretch like Sukumala"

"Who was this Sukumala? I am curious to know all about her"

Kunchika started again

"In the city of Champa, there reigned King Jitasatru. Sukumala was the name of his queen The king was immensely fond of her. This affection developed into a lust and the king never moved apart from her presence. He stopped attending the court or looking after the affairs of the state. This made the minister extremely anxious about the future of the kingdom One day, he sought an audience with the king and tried his best to make him realise the situation, but all was in vain. The king asked the minister to disturb him no more, and, in turn, gave the minister the full authority to run the affairs of the state as best as he could.

"On this, an urgent session of the council of ministers was called at once wherein it was decided that at some dead hour of the night, when the royal couple would be fast asleep under the spell of some drug or drink, their cot should be carried to some far-off forest and discarded there. That would be an end of the trouble. Thereafter the crown-prince should be placed on the throne. For, the ministers rightly felt that a king ceased to be a king if he discharged not the royal duties Even people of the kingdom were wholly disgusted at the light-heartedness and indifference of their monarch

"The decision was given effect to. One night, the carriers picked up the cot on which the royal couple lay and discarded it in a far-off forest. As the king and the queen were under the spell of liquor, they could know nothing. After some time, when the kind regained some sense and looked around, he could see nothing in the pitchy darkness, but he had some sort of a feeling that he was not in the palace chamber. He rubbed his eyes to make sure about the situation, but there was no improvement. And he did it again He gave a push to the queen, but she said, 'It's not yet morning. Please disturb me not.'

"But the king was totally upset. He pulled her up and told her that there had been a total down-turn of their luck Sukumala now opened her eyes and was surprised at what she saw. She exclaimed. 'Is it a trick or treachery ? Have we been exiled ? Are our men and ministers so ungrateful as this ? They depend on their king and yet they have betrayed him. They must have taken advantage of your goodness. You should at once return to the palace and punish all the malefactors,'

"Jitasatru said

'But how can I blame others when all this is the outcome of my own doing. Had I not been a blind victim of lust, surely I could not have been insulted like

this. But, in any case, I cann't return to my kingdom At night-fall, when we entered into the bed, we were king and queen, but now we are no more than common folks. So long we led a life free from care and toil, but henceforth we have to work hard to earn out livelihood. We should proceed to some city that may be in the neighbourhood and try our luck there.'

"So they stood up and moved together in one direction. Nothing was visible in the darkness and the way was so unfamiliar. When the sun was up, it was terribly hot The queen was oppressed with thirst and could move no longer. There was no water available in the neighbourhood. After a great search, the king procured some water for her. They moved a little further when the queen was hungry. With great difficulty, the king procured sufficient fruits to appease her hunger

'At last. the royal couple reached the city of Varanasi The king sold out the ornaments of the queen and had some money on hand. He rented a house and started a small business. As he had no experience of business, he could not amass a furtune, but he could earn just enough to meet the cost of their subsistence.

"Time rolled on like this Jitasatru and Sukumala were now no more than commoners. Life was hard and dull, there was no longer any pleasure in it One day, Sukumala said to her husband, 'We were so happy in the past when we lived at the palace, and you were all the time by my side. I was surrounded by so many maids and attendants all the time. There were sundry objects of pleasure to engage my mind. But here, you go out pretty early in the morning and come back late at night. There is none at home with whom I can even speak. Life has become so dull and meaningless. Could you not do something to relieve me of this loneliness ?'

"One night, as Jitasatru was coming back from his shop, he saw a musician singing from a side-walk. His sweet voice attracted many round him. The man was a cripple and supported himself by singing. Jitasatru invited the man to come and live with him. He thought that the company of so jovial a man would make his wife happy. The cripple was a little surprised at this turn of his luck, but he agreed. This was a ready solution of his problem, and it would not be necessary for him to move any more from place to place. Sukumala also welcomed the new arrangement.

"Jitasatru's financial position was slowly looking up. Now, he earned more than he spent, and he could make some saving. But he was gradually losing his grip on the wife. Sukumala spent the whole day in the company of the musician and became fond of him. Her heart was transferred from Jitasatru to this new arrival. One day, the cripple said to her 'My dear! Our hearts are now united, but if by any chance Jitasatru comes to know of this, we shall be completely undone. So when there's time, we should do something in the matter.' Sukumala agreed with him and assured him that she was perfectly conscious of this and that at the right moment, they should take the thorn out.

"Months passed and seasons changed. Winter was followed by spring. One day, Jitasatru and Sukumala were seated in a happy mood when the latter made a proposal that they should together bathe in the Ganga. Her grouse was that she did not enjoy this form of pleasure ever since she left the palace. The earlier it could be arranged, the better. Jitasatru also liked the proposal, and he readily agreed. On the appointed day, they left the cripple at home and reached the bank of the Ganga. Hand in hand, they entered into the water. They were now waist-deep in water. 'This is not enough', shouted Sukumala. 'We must go deeper still.' Now,

they were upto their neck inside water. Jitasatru thought that he had not obliged his lady for a long time, and that he should now compensate for this long neglect. He held her in a deep embrace.

"Sukumala's mind was, however, elsewhere planning some mischief She did not pay much attention to what the king did or said. The few words that she herself spoke contained no warmth. But the king did not notice this. He was busy enjoying himself. They spent sometime like this. Sukumala was, however, looking for a chance. When at last she found that the king had lost all control of himself and had completely given himself up to her, she lost no time to give him a severe push into the very depth of water. She didn't care even to see what happened to him, but rushed out of the water, and at a hurried pace, returned to her home to tell the cripple that she had successfully completed the mission.

"Finding himself in the depth of water, the king struggled for life for some time , and as luck would have it, he escaped the jaws of death. But he had now a complete picture of the betrayal. He was convinced that this occasion was contrived to liquidate him. He had now but hatred for the unfaithful woman, and more than that he had a great remorse for his own blindness. Within a moment, he made a complete review of his whole life, as if the whole thing was on a screen--how happy he was once in the company of this very woman who was his first queen, how his blind lust for her body turned him away from the position of a king to that of a pauper, how hard he was now struggling for life, and so on. But this day's incident open a new outlook for him, and he felt that this was the most sacred moment of his life, since, at this moment, he was wholly liberated of the company of one who was inherently and basically low. The king was an expert in swimming. Besides, he got the support of a piece of floating log. So he swam for a long

distance, came out of the water and sat down to rest under a tree. He could see from where he sat the skyline of the city which was not far.

"Seated in the shade of the tree, the king could now extend his gaze into the future. He had none by his side to help him, but he had none either to obstruct him He had no more feeling of pleasure and pain He tried to read into the future, but he could see nothing It was all hazy But he felt no depression He was at least happy to be free from the association of Sukumala who had betrayed him Only one feeling was dominant in him at this momenr, and it was the feeling of a great relief

"Just then his eyes fell on a vast group of men who were moving in his direction An elephant holding a garland in her trunk was moving ahead of them The king thought that it must be some ceremonial procession approaching the holy river. As he did not like his thoughts to be disturbed by these strangers, he moved himself off to a considerable distance and sat beneath another tree But lo ! the elephant and the men too changed their course as if he himself was their destination As they came nearer, the elephant moved at a faster speed, came near Jitasatru and placed the garland on his neck. The men hailed him as their new king and bowed before him All this happened with such a speed that the king could not understand if it was a reality or a dream. One of the ministers came forward and apprised him of their situation, 'Sir our king has recently passed away and so we are without a king Hence as per convention for an occasion like this, we let lose this elephant and we ourselves followed her. Now, by her choice, you are our new king. So please accept the position and be a king unto us.'

"Introducing himself, the king said, 'I was once a king, and I am a king again.' 'But, sir, how about the time in

between ?' asked the inquisitive minister. 'I was then a commoner,' said the king.'

"Meanwhile the elephant raised up the new king with her trunk and placed him on her back. The whole party then moved towards the city. They reached the palace, where the king was duly placed on the throne and given charge of the highest office of the state. The king administered his realm in a very efficient manner, but he had no attachment in anything. The minister suggested that he should take a wife, but the king politely declined.

"Elsewhere, Sukumala was spending her days in the company of the cripple. Jitasatru had left some saving behind, and so for some time there was no difficulty, but they could not live like that for long They were scon faced with the prospect of penury. One day, the cripple asked Sukumala to earn for their sustenance. Said he, 'You see, I am a cripple and I cann't move. So please do something so that we may have some earning.' 'How can I ?' retorted the lady 'I am a woman I have no experience of earning money. It is the duty of a man to support his wife I cann't go to earn' Again some days passed like this, but with great difficulty At last, they came to an agreed solution which was that Sukumala would carry the cripple on her back, and the latter would sing and beg. They felt that that would be a nice way of living on public compassion.

"They were now moving from one city to another People were attracted by the sweet voice of the cripple, and they took pity on him. When his music would be over, Sukumala would tell the people, 'I am a devoted and pious wom an. But my parents have married me with this cripple. So I carry him on my back, but we lead a very honest and pure life. So be kind to us and help us as best as you can. Your generosity is our only support in this world'. Such pitiable words would dissolve even a rock, what to speak of the human heart. Thus they lived on.

"In the course of their wanderings, they now reached the city where Jitasatru was the king. Soon the news about the musician spread all over the city and even reached the ears of the king. The king sent fot them. Sukumala and the cripple felt elated at this invitation from the palace. They felt that they would now be in the king's grace, and their hard days would soon be over. They arrived at the court. This was a very special occasion for the musician who throughout his life had been a street singer and had never had a chance to sing at the court. So he was in the very best of his forms. The audience was charmed and listened with undivided attention. When at last the music stopped, there was a loud applause all around

"When the music was over Sukumala took her chance to incite public compassion She made a short speech and started collecting money As she approached the king, the latter said, 'Woman ! Did you ever have another man to call your own whom you pushed into the deep water of the Ganga ?' Sukumala became pale and stiff at once. The flow of her words dried up and she looked at the king. The earth slipped from beneath her feet She started shouting and crying, as if she had been haunted or had gone mad. At last, she fell at the king's feet and begged for mercy People who had been happy to hear the music were completely taken by surprise at this melodrama. Said the king to the woman, 'You are a woman So I spare your life. But you get out at once from the four corners of my kingdom If you ever become visible within my realm, you will pay with you life."

said Munipati to Kunchika,

"Oh merchant ! Despite all I have said, it seems that you have still doubts in my honesty. To remove them, all I can do now is to swear like Bhadra Brisabha."

"Oh monk! Who was this Bhadra Brisabha and how did he swear?"

The monk started,

"In the city of Champa, during the reign of King Ajitasena, there was a monastery-owner, who also possessed two herds of cattle. Once a cow gave birth to a male calf who grew into a fine bull in course of time and freely roamed all over the city People loved him and affectionately gave him the name of Suryasanda (the sun's bull).

"In the same city, there lived a merchant named Jinadasa who was a devout *sravaka* and was very regular in his spiritual practice including *kayotsarga* meditation. But his wife Dhanasri was just the reverse of him, highly sinful, and a lady of very loose morals. Often at night, when Jinadasa was in the *kayotsarga* meditation, she would be in the company of other men.

"One night, it so happened that when she was in the company of some of her admirers, her husband Jinadasa who was in the *kayotsarga* posture fell a victim to a fatal accident. When in the morning the lady saw her husband's dead body, she got alarmed, since, she felt, people would suspect her hand in the matter. Just at that time, the bull Surysanda was passing by that way. The lady put some of her husband's blood on his horns and started mourning and bewailing. This soon attracted a large crowd of sympathisers. When they saw the blood on the bull's horns, they beat the bull severely. The bull turned his head again and again communicating his own innocence, but people didn't understand him. So the bull at last came to the police chief and started turning his head in the same manner, Now, some people understood his intention and said, 'Maybe the bull is trying to convey his own innocence in the matter.' At this, the bull signified his profound assent by touching the ground with his tongue. So the people at once arranged a test before they would exonerate

him. They brought an iron ball and heated it red. As they were about to place it on the bull's head, he extended his tongue and gladly held it. The people were surprised to see that the bull's tongue remained unburnt, while the ball cooled. The bull was declared innocent and was geatly honoured by the people. Dhanasri was turned out of the city. "So, merchant," said the monk, "as you believe not in my words, I am prepared to swear and stand by any test to convince you of my innocence, as the bull had done. But something must be speedily done to remove your suspicion."

But the merchant didn't stop repeating his allegation, denouncing the monk's conduct in strong words, and comparing him with a lizard. When the monk asked the reason for this comparison, tke merchant said,

"A certain lizard had sore in her eyes. One night, as she was asleep, lots of pus came out of her eyes, and in the morning, inspite of her best effort, she could not open them. Now, many flies started moving round her eyes and ate the pus clean, which opened the eyes at once. But the lizard ate a large number of flies. You have done like that, oh monk. I gave you shelter during the rainy season, and yov have removed my treasure." The merchant continued, "For a confirmed criminal like you, swearing is just useless. You have a stiff heart, and so the story of the bull you narrated a little while ago has no impact on me."

The monk felt hurt at these words, but he said

"Have you, by any chance, a proof to establish my guilt? It's just a suspicion that haunts your mind, and that should not be the basis of so grave a charge. You are intelligent enough to distinguish truth from falsehood, as was the case with the minister Subuddhi."

"Pray, who was this minister, and how did he distinguish truth from falsehood?"

Munipati started his story .

"In the city of Champakamala. there reigned a king named Vasupala who had a very able minister in Subuddhi. In the same city, there lived a rich and very popular merchant named Abhinava. Sundari was the name of his daughter. Merchant Dhanapala was his neighbour but he was poor He had a daughter named Kanku. The two girls were friends One day, both the girls came to a tank to enjoy water sports. Sundari took out her ornaments and deposited them on the tank before she entered into water. Now, Kanku had an evil design She came out earlier, picked up the ornaments and left. When Sundari came out, she did not find her precious things. When she reported it to her father, he came to Dhanapala, but the latter, instead of admitting his daughter's fault, told him flatly that the ornaments belonged to his daughter and that the allegation was baseless The matter came up for the minister's arbitration and he gave proof of his ready wit. He ordered for the production of both the girls and the ornaments before him. When this was done, the minister turned to Kanku and said, 'My daughter, you say these are yours. Very good. Please put them on.'

"Kanku started, but as she was not used to ornaments, in the process of wearing she exhibited her own ignorance about them Besides, they didn't fit well with her person. When Sundari's turn came, she did wear them at once and with skilled hands, and they fitted in well. Now, the minister took no time to give his verdict 'The ornaments belong to Sundari, not Kanku They may be returned to Abhinava, and Dhanapala is to be punished for their improper acquisition and wrongful possession according to the law of the land.' "

Munipati added,

"Merchant ! You are shrewd and intelligent, but you distinguish not truth from falsehood. Truth is something different from your notion."

To this, the merchant replied, "I do not understand what you say. But it appears to me that you are taking shelter behind a jugglery of words like one brahmin."

"What brahmin, pray?" said the monk

The marchant started,

"In a certain village in Magadha, there lived a poor brahmin Once, there broke out a terrible famine in that country and the brahmin was set to thinking how to survive through the critical time He brought a piece of wood from the forest, carved a Durga image out of it and started wandering from village to village He would sing in praise of the goddess This had great impact on the village folk. It was a sheer chance that a rich merchant, who was childless, got a son by propitiating the image, and at once its dignity and prestige in the public gaze shot up With it the brahmin's luck took a favourable turn Henceforth, every day, he got ample offerings in cash and kind and soon he was able to change the wooden image into a golden one The wooden image was dumped in the garbage bin The same has been the case with you, oh monk So long as you were ailing and the monsoon months were before you, you behaved well with me But now that your interest in me has waned, you have deceived me to an extent which may cost even my life"

To this, the monk said,

"Merchant! you are still under a very wrong impression, and are not trying to understand the reality I reiterate that I have not touched your treasure A monk always behaves like Jinadatta and never stoops to a low level"

"Who was this Jinadatta, sir?"

"Jinadatta was a *sravaka*, the son of a merchant named Jinadasa, who was well-versed in the Jaina tenets As an inspired soul ever since his birth, Jinadatta never took inter-

est in mundane affairs and had decided not to marry. This was a source of great worry for the family and the near and dear ones. They were waiting far a chance to change his mind.

"One day, Jinadatta had gone out to the city park in the company of his friends. In a Jina temple in the park, he sat down to pray. It was an accident that at that time, a beautiful damsel was already engaged in prayer in the same temple, and Jinadatta's eyes fell on her This was Jinamati, daughter of one Priyamitra, who had extensive trade with foreign lands. Jinadatta felt impressed at the dame's devotion. As he made enquiries about her from his friends —and indeed this was the first occasion when he made any such enquiry—they told him all that they knew about her, adding, 'The workmanship of the Creator will be duly rewarded if you two were united'

"Jinadatta didnt' like the suggestion 'You talk of marriage even in a temple This is no place for playing pranks or cutting jokes You know well how little do I care for marriage I saw her in deep prayer, and so I enquired, without any motive'

"After finishing her prayer, as Jinamati stood up to go, her eyes too fell on Jinadatta, and she liked his youth, vigour and manliness. She felt a love for him at first sight. Her companions noticed this and secretly reported it to her father, who became happy.

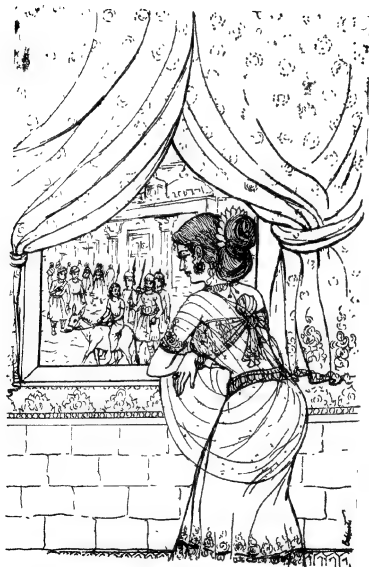
"Now, Priyamitra came to Jinadasa with the proposal of the marriage of his daughter with the latter's son, which the merchant welcomed with joy. When, however, Jinadasa took the matter to his son, the son said, 'Sire ! You know well that I intend to join the holy order'

"This was a very difficult situation. Jinadasa had already given his assent to the proposal. So he said to his son, 'Did you, by any chance, see the girl ?' Jinadatta said nothing.

"But mysterious is the way of destiny The town-keeper Basudatta saw the girl one day, as she was going somewhere, and he became mad to get her He sent his proposal to Priyamitra at once but was told that she was already betrothed to Jinadatta Thenceforth Basudatta was on the look-out for a chance to remove Jinadatta from this world so that he would have no rival to get the girl's hand.

"One day, the king had gone out on a holiday with the royal household, and, by chance, one of his ear-rings dropped somewhere on the way Inspite of all searches, it could not be found The king entrusted the search to Basudatta, who luckily found it soon and restored it to the king When the king enquired how he got it, he said, it had been recovered from Jinadatta The king could not believe at once For, Jinadatta was well-known for his spiritual leanings, But Basudatta insisted, 'Your Majesty! Religion is just a camouflage for all his misdeeds So far I desisted from reporting against him to Your Majesty, but, sir, in the whole kingdom, there is none who may equal him in vile deeds' The king gave orders that such a wicked person should be wiped out as soon as possible

"Basudatta spent no time to arrest Jinadatta and took him round the city on the back of a donkey, as was the practice with all the condemned persons in those days. What an irony of fate! Whoever saw him in this state was not only shocked and shed tears, but openly decried the king and his town-keeper Only the low-brows talked ill of the pious man.

"When Jinamati heard the noise in the street, she came at her window and was shocked to see the pitiable sight. Just at that moment, Jinadatta's eyes also fell on her and he was sorry to see the girl's plight. For the first time, he felt that the girl loved him and he did a wrong thing in

Jinadatta's eyes also fell on her.

not agreeing to marry her He resolved to make her happy if he could escape from this ordeal.

"Jinamati at once invoked Sasan Devi and stood herself in *kayotsarga* meditation. Pure as she was, her propitiation had an instantaneous effect Thrice was Jinadatta placed on a naked spear, and thrice it broke like a stalk of hay. Then effort was made to hang him from a tree, but even this proved futile Basudatta applied his own sword several times, but what could he do when Sasan Devi had herself placed him under her protection

"The matter was brought to the king's notice who was alarmed for having tortured a pious man on a false report He hurried to the execution ground, embraced Jinadatta and took him with himself to the palace on the back of his own elephant As the king was wholly ignorant about Basudatta's jealousy towards him, he made a full enquiry about it Jinadatta presented the facts as he knew Basudatta now stood exposed, and was condemned by the king. Though his life was spared at Jinadatta's earnest request, he was sent into exile for good,

"Jinadatta now married Jinamati, and lived happily for many years in the household order Born as a pious man, he lived a worthy life, adding more and more to his spiritual assets Oh merchant! You should understand, that a monk's life is a worthy life which adds only to his spiritual assets and nothing to his liabilities His life is meant to help all, even a malefactor, as Jinadatta himself did to save Basudatta's life There is no point in saying that a monk is ungrateful Be patient and try to understand the situation. I didn't touch your wealth"

At these words, Kunchika retorted,

"You compare yourself with Jinadatta, but behave like a certain hunter. How do you reconcile the two positions?" They are as far apart as the east is from the west"

"Who was the hunter you speak of, my good friend ?' Kunchika started,

"King Haripala of the city of Harikanta was the keeper of a thousand monkeys In the same city, there lived a hunter who was cruel, ruthless and ungrateful, Every day, he killed many animals in the forest One day, he encountered a fierce tiger who chased after him, and to save his own life, he got up on a tree. There was seated on the tree a female monkey with her mouth wide agape, and the hunter was between a frying pan and a fire The monkey at once read into his mind and assured him safety Slowly, she came near him and sat beside him So much affection from an animal moved the hunter, who now stretched himself against a branch and placed his head on the monkey's lap

"The tiger on the ground was helpless He tried to create a rift between the monkey and the man. Said the tiger to the monkey, 'Good lady ! You have extended your protection to the man but how many in this world give price for it ? Man is particularly known for his ingratitude May I tell you a story about it In a certain village, there lived a brahmin named Siva. Once on a pilgrimage. he reached a dense forest While searching for water, he saw a dilapidated well He prepared a rope with grass and sought to draw water with its help At the first chance came out a monkey. He tried again and this time came out a tiger and a snake. They bowed before the brahmin and expressed their gratitude for taking them out. The monkey said that all of them, himself, the tiger and the snake, were residents of Mathura, and if the brahmin ever visited that city, they would be happy to host him But he cautioned the brahmin that there was a human being inside the well, and he would be ill-advised to take him out. The fellow was not sinful, but he was ungrateful, he said, and then the three departed

"Now, the brahmin sat thinking what to do about the man in the well, and after much consideration, he decided to help him out. The monkey was after all an animal, thought he, and he could hardly adjudicate on the value of a man. So he cast the rope again and helped the man out. When Siva asked him who he was, the man said, 'I am a goldsmith from Mathura I came here on business but slipped into this well. There is a tree inside, and I saved myself with great difficulty by holding a branch of the tree. Later, the monkey, the tiger and the snake joined me In distress, we forgot our natural enmity and lived in co-existence I shall never forget the service you have rendered to me. If you ever come to Mathura, please give me a chance to be your host'

"Thereafter, many years passed Once Siva remembered the monkey's words of caution againt the man and decided at once to take a test He set out on a pilgrimage and reached Mathura The monkey was there He racognised his benefactor at once and accorded him a cordial reception. He placed before him sweet fruits As he proceeded from there, he saw the tiger and the the tiger too recognised the brahmin in a moment He at once killed a prince who had come there for hunting, took out his ornaments and gave them to the brahmin.

"Now, Siva come to the goldsmith. As the smith saw the brahmin coming, he recognised him but tried to avoid him. But Siva stood just in his front and asked if he recognised him or not. In a very cold manner, the smith said that he found it hard to place him Siva recounted the past story and said, 'I have come on an invitation from you, my dear friend.'

"But the smith showed no improvement in his manners, and Siva too would not move out. He sat there and said, 'Can you help me in an affair?' 'Perhaps I may,' said the smith indifferently. The brahmin then took out the

ornaments given to him by the tiger and held them before the smith. 'I want to sell them Can you give me a fair price for them ?'

"Now the smith got interested He kept the ornaments with himself. The brahmin went to the river to take his bath. Meanwhile, the report of the prince's death in the forest spread all over the city, and there was a proclamation to the effect that the prince s ornaments had been stolen from his body, and that anyone giving a clue to their recovery would be rewarded by the king The smith heard it and had no doubt that the ornaments lodged with him were really the prince's, Maybe, out of greed, the brahmin had murdered him So the smith came to the court, surrendered the ornaments and disclosed the brahmin's name.

"The brahmin was at once taken into custody on the river bank and produced before the king. The king held consultation with his council of ministers Although a scholar by brahmin was involved, yet the law was to take its own course irrespective of caste and erudition. The council was unanimous in awarding the brahmin death sentence. The poor fellow was not even given a chance to defend himself. According to rules, red sandal paste was placed on his person and he was seated on the back of a donkey and was taken round the city, before being conducted to the execution ground. In this critical time, tbe monkey's words came up in his mind—'*the fellow is ungrateful*.' But what could he do now except submitting to fate very silently ? Suddenly the following couplet came out of his mouth :

'Listened not I to cautious words
Uttered by a monkey, a tiger aad a snake,
Hence for the smith's ingratitude,
My life is now at stake.'

"The snake who was crawling nearby heard these words and at once recognised the brahmin. He took no

time to understand the situation, and, to save his benefactor's life, he crawled in a hurry to the palace-garden where the princess was at play The snake gave a sharp bite to her and she fell on the ground at once The news reached the king and spread all over the town. The death of the princess so soon after the death of the prince was considered to be a great misfortune and calamity.

"Just then, a savant-seer had come to the city who told the king that the second calamity was caused for his having condemned an innocent brahmin to death. 'But what proof have you got to prove the brahmin's innocence?' said the king. The seer narrated the background story, adding in the end, 'The monkey and the tiger have been good hosts, but the smith has betrayed him' 'But yours may be a concocted story,' said the king. 'How do I believe in your account?' The seer at once brought the snake in the person of the princess and the snake gave the account through the princess's mouth The king had now no reason to disbelieve. The brahmin was at once set free and the princess was restored to her life, The seer now said to the brahmin 'Sir! It is the snake who is thy saviour' The brahmin said, 'What an irony, sir, that while animals are grateful, so very ungrateful is the man'

"The king was so impressed by the brahmin's scholarship that he gave him the position of a minister of the realm. The goldsmith was exiled from the city. The brahmin, in gratitude, adored the snake, and worshipped him thereafter every year Concluding his story, the tiger said to the monkey,

" 'So, lady, rely not on this hunter. He will put you in danger Better push him down and let me satisfy my hunger'

"But this had no effect on the monkey who turned a deaf ear to the tiger. After some time, the man woke up, and it was now the monkey's turn to lie and take rest. The tiger now addressed his counsel to the man

" ' Worthy man ! Rely not on this monkey. She is ungrateful. She poses to be friendly but will deceive you in time. I am hungry for a week and you are anxious to return home But till I get either of you, I shall not go , and till I go, you cannot come down So I advise you to pass the monkey on to me I will eat it and go, and then you will be free to come down safely and go

"The tiger spoke so many words in a single breath, and yet he did not stop. Added he, 'As a species, the monkeys are ungrateful Let me tell you the story of an unfortunate king who was killed by his monkey. This was King Pavaka of Nagpur who was carried to a dense forest by a misdirected horse, Oppressed by hunger and thirst, he was roaming to and fro There he saw a monkey who understood the king's difficulty, gave him some fruits and showed him a pool of clean and cool water Meanwhile, his men joined him and the party started back, with the monkey accompanying it at the king's desire. The monkey was given a privileged position at the palace, and was supplied with the best of fruits and that in plenty. Later, he was made an A D, C. to the king, and he followed the king's person like his own shadow.

" 'It was spring. The king had gone out to the palace-garden where he was resting beneath a tree. Just then a drone came buzzing and sat on his body. The monkey tried his best to drive it away, but when he failed, he struck at it with his sword, killing the king So, man, take my advice and push the monkey down. In doing this, you will reap a greater advantage than me.'

"The hunter was influenced by the tiger's word. He pushed the monkey down and it was now held by the tiger in his paws. The tiger said to her, 'Madam ! This is the outcome of your being in a wrong company.' But the monkey did not lose her wit nor become nervous , instead. she said

in a calm voice. 'My dear friend' How lucky I deem myself to-day that my body will be in thy service Have no mercy on me and I beseech, you take my flesh at once But I have only a little submission to make, which is that in the case of the monkeys as a species, their soul resides only in the tail. So you will be well-advised to start at the tail end. This will make my flesh more tasteful to thee and I shall also be relieved of pain very soon'

"The tiger laughed aloud and was about to catch the monkey's tail when she escaped and mounted on a tree. The humiliated and disappointed tiger now left the place. But the monkey was so good that she bore no malice or anger towards the hunter Rather, she told him that the tiger was gone and she offered to escort him out to a safe place

"The monkey brought the man to her own shelter where her offsprings were at play She left the hunter there and herself went out in search of some fruits But the inconsiderate man killed the young ones and put them in his bag When the monkey came back, she did not find her offsprings. She placed the fruits before the hunter and moved out in search of them The hunter too started with her Meanwhile, vile thoughts took hold of the man and he put the monkey to death with his club.

"A sinful man has no element of mercy in him. With the dead monkey on his shoulder, the hunter was now on his way home Again he came across the same tiger When the tiger saw the dead monkey on the hunter's back, said he, 'Ye wretch! What did ye do? You did not even hesitate to kill one who had treated you like her own brother It is a sin to look at you even. Get out of my sight at once. I intend not to touch you because to touch a man like you is sinful and I do not want to share in your sin and ingratitude.

"But the hunter's heart was not touched Perfectly unconcerned and happy at the big catch, he returned

The tiger was about to catch the monkey's tail
when she escaped.

home Meanwhile, the report had reached the king that one of his pet monkeys had been killed by a certain hunter, and that too not by a proper weapon but by a club, which was against the law of the land The hunter was at once taken a prisoner and produced before the king He was first tortured and was then being taken to the execution ground, with the king coming in the rear. Just then the tiger appeared again and cautioned the king not to execute the hunter Said he, 'Sire ! The sins committed by this wretch are so heinous and serious that anyone punishing him will also share his sins It's more appropriate that he be left to his own destiny ' The king was startled at these words and requested the tiger to give a full account about the man, which the tiger was reluctant to do himself. He directed the king to an *acharya* who he said, was not far from there and who was a man with great knowledge and power

"The king spared the hunter's life but ordered him to leave the city at once He then looked for the *acharya* and was soon before him Said he, '*Bhante* ! Where is the monkey gone ?' 'In heaven, of course,' was the reply. 'And where will the hunter go after death', the king asked. 'Where else but to hell', said the monk 'Those who are ungrateful, cruel, sinful, malicious and hard-hearted, for them hell is the right place,' To the king's enquiry about the tiger, the *acharya* said, 'That was a divine person in the skin of a tiger who came down to witness the monkey's behaviour because the monkey is destined to have a place in heaven While in heaven, the god had himself heard a reference to that effect and came down to see what it was that would earn for the monkey a place in the celestial region ' "

Concluding his story, Kunchika said,

"Oh monk ! You are like the hunter. Your ingratitude brings back to my memory that incident and my soul silently weeps "

The monk protested,

"It is not thy soul, oh merchant, that weeps. That's the lot of my soul. You should not bring a false charge against a monk like this. Like Devi, a thief's spouse, you are only extending invitation to repentance. One who causes unnecessary pain to a monk inevitably repents."

"How is that ? What is Devi's story ?"

Munipati started,

"There lived in a certain village in Magadha a thief named Vira Devi was his wife. Vira's daily profession was to break into other people's houses This is how he earned his daily bread. In a hole in the wall of his house, there lived a mongoose who gave birth to an offspring The little creature was Devi's pet and she supplied it with food everyday Now, Devi also gave birth to a son, and when the son grew up, he played with the young mongoose One day, Devi left the sleeping child on a bamboo platform and went out on some domestic errand The mongoose was there Just then a snake came out of the hole and crawled near the boy The mongoose saw it and tore it to pieces. As the lady was coming back, the happy mongoose met her on the way. When the lady saw blood on its mouth, she thought that her own son must have been killed by it So she killed the mongoose on the spot. Then she rushed to her bed-room where she found her own boy quite safe, but pieces of a dead snake lay scattered on the floor The lady was heartily sorry for having killed the mongoose who had in fact saved her son's life Thereafter, she could never get rid of her penitence. You are doing the same to me. You are doing something for which you will repent for ever. You should think twice before you charge anyone."

' Sir ! You are like that *bhila* who put to danger the life of an elephant who produced pearls."

"Who was this fellow ? What is his story ?"

Kunchika started,

"In a certain forest, there lived a white elephant with a herd of 700 she-elephants Once, while wandering, an iron nail pricked into his leg He had so much pain that he could hardly move and lay in one place for days without food and drink One elephant from the herd saw a *bhila* one day and she induced him to follow her She brought him straight to the suffering elephant and the man took out the nail In gratitude, the elephant gave him many tusks and pearls By selling these, the *bhila* was now a rich man When people enquired about his sudden affluence, he narrated the whole story This soon reached the ears of the king Out of greed for the tusks and the pearls, the king caught the whole herd and brought the elephants to his city Sir, you are like that ungrateful *bhila* The elephant had rewarded him but it was his report to the king that deprived the whole herd of its liberty. By taking out my treasure you have put me to difficulty in the same manner"

The monk knew not how to change the opinion of the merchant about himself So he spoke in a somewhat rude tone,

"Merchant ! Even animals are more considerate than you are They take not much time to know the truth, but not you How very wonderful is this !"

"Sir ! How do you say that animals are more considerate than me ?"

"I give you an instance," said the monk "On the Vaitadhya hill, in a certain cave, there lived a lioness A she-deer and a she-jackal were her intimate friends Once the lioness gave birth to an offspring, but after delivery as she became very hungry, she left her offspring with her friends and herself moved out in search of some prey The deer lay on the ground and fell asleep. Thus the jackal

was alone, and she ate the offspting. She then put some blood on the mouth of the sleeping deer and left.

"When the lioness returned. she didn't find her offspring and became restless. Meanwhile, the jackal returned after cleaning herself. She said, 'My friend ! I had myself gone out on business. The child was all right when I left. The deer was here, and it seems, there is blood on her mouth Maybe, she has killed the child.' Now the deer was pulled up from her sleep. But the poor animal said, 'I fell asleep, and I know nothing as to what happened.' Then turning to the jackal she said, 'There was none else at this place but two of us, and none seems to have come. I do not understand what may be the real story.'

"The jackal was extremely cunning. She said, 'But I see blood on your mouth. So you should know more than me as to what has happened. To be very frank you may have swallowed up the poor little thing' But the lioness was intelligent. She knew well that a deer was not accustomed to take meat. So she could not have swallowed her offspring. She had no doubt now that this was the doing of the jackal. So she said, "Quarrel not over it Better both of you vomit and facts will speak themselves out.' This was done and the jackal was exposed and killed by the lioness on the spot Thus, merchant, even animals are considerate They can arrive at truth and harp not on untruth as you do. You cannot rise above this level till you discard your wrong impression."

"How do I believe in your words when you are ungrateful like that lion ?"

"What lion ?"

"There was a concentration of hermits near the Himalayas. In a nearby cave, there lived a demon who, under the influence of the hermits, had given up his sinful activities. It was winter and very cold outside. One night, when the demon had gone out, a lion who was bitterly shivering came there and took shelter inside.

When the demon came back and saw the lion, he did not disturb him but lay outside in the cold. At dead of night, when the lion woke up and came out, he saw the demon and devoured him."

The monk was very much perturbed at the merchant's insistence. Said he,

"I had no intention to harm you in any way, my dear merchant But you are adamant. So now I have no other alternative but to extend and expose both my hands, as was done by merchant Katha"

"Who was merchant Katha ?"

"Katha was a pious, kind-hearted *sravaka* who lived in Rajagriha during the reign of Srenika He erected a huge mansion for his residence which took six months to be completed Then, on an auspicious day, before he made a formal entry into the building, learned priests were invited and dieties were duly propitiated. But as the merchant was about to step in, there were some inauspicious omens, and the priests advised him not to enter at that moment. A new time was fixed for his entry, and this time there were very good and exceptionally favourable omens and the merchant started residing in that building

"One day, the merchant's wife, Bhadra, saw a ship floating on the sea in her dream When she spoke to her husband about it, said he, 'It's a very good dream We will soon have a boy.' The foresast came true and the boy was named Sagardatta When he was eight, he was sent to school, and on the occasion, many scholars were invited and fed There were two monks in the assembly of guests. As they sat to dine, a cock seated on the wall said to the merchant, 'If you feed me, I shall make your son a king' One of the monks nodded at this When the other asked him about the cause of his nod, he said. 'It is due to this cock that the boy will get a kingdom.' This conversation fell

He bought the whole cage on payment of 500 gold pieces.

into Katha's ears. Food was not only offered to the cock, but the cock was addopted as a pet by the merchant.

"One day, King Srenika asked Katha to procure for him one exceptional fabric from Yavanadesa and the merchant agreed to do so. But the merchant's wife Bhadra would not let him go Said she, 'This means that you will be away from home for a very long time, but I am not prepared to stay without you even for a single day' 'But, my dear,' the merchant tried to argue, 'this work has been assigned by the king himself and I could not decline and disoblige him. I shall finish it as soon as I can and come back.'

"As Katha was coming to his shop, he saw a brahmin with a cage in his hand, and inside the cage, there was a parrot couple The merchant took the eage in his own hand and the couple blessed him at once. This created in him an interest about the birds and he bought the whole cage on payment of 500 gold pieces. He took the cage to his shop with him The parrots revealed that they were gods under the spell of a curse. The merchant felt curious to know about their past history, and the male parrot gave his account as follows, 'My name is Nandavarta and I belong to the court of Dharanendra. Once my master asked me to go down to the earth where he assigned me the duty of worshipping Lord Parsva whose image had been installed at a temple in a forest near Varanasi. Happily did I come down to the earth to fulfil my commission'

"Continued the prrrot, 'One day, a holy person endowed with certain powers came to that city. A prince of royal blood, a marchant's son and many nobles were attending on him Now, a cowherd came there and prayed for his favour but to no effect. He repeated his request several times, which enraged the man, who, in anger, uttered a few words that made no sense The cowherd took these to be the holy words given to him by the man, memorised

them correctly, sat down in my forest and repeated them on beads. I tried to dissuade him but the fellow was adamant and did not take to his heels. Then I asked him to seek a boon, and he asked for a house-full of wealth Now, as I was busy in getting the wealth for him, in my absence from the temple, may master come on a surprise visit and did not find me there. The Lord had not been worshipped for a few days. When he detected this lapse on my part, he became furious and it was his curse that turned me into a parrot. Since then, I have been living in this forest as a bird You can imagine, sir, what a miserable thing it is for a divine being to live like a parrot. My wife also preferred to join with me in the form of a bird When we fell at Dharanendra's feet and begged for mercy, he said that in order to regain our previous state, we must serve and please you As we were perched on the branch of a tree, this brahmin caught us and brought us to the market. This has turned out to be a lucky chance for us, since we are now with you. This has improved the brahmin's luck, who has got 500 gold pieces by selling us and this has also brought us nearer to our own liberation. But, sir, please keep my account in confidence and pass it on to none If you do not do it, you put your own life in risk.'

"Katha agreed. Just at that time a monk stood before his shop begging alms. As he stood there, a straw from the thatch fell on his head. The monk was enraged. 'In my life, 'said he, 'I have never accepted a thing not given to me. But this straw has fallen on my head, and I deem it to be a serious lapse on my part. I must cut off my head' As he was about to do so, people held him fast and prevented him from committing suicide.

"This impressed Katha, who felt that this was no ordinary monk. If he could be induced to stay in a room in his mansion during his absence from home, thought he, then his wife Bhadra would not feel lonely, but will have the

benefit of listening to his holy words So he made his request to the monk. The monk would not agree. But the merchant was very insistent and at last the monk agreed. Katha told his wife that the monk would stay in a room at the entrance and that he should be given his daily food. He also advised her to take good care of the cock and the parrots and departed for Yavanadesa to fulfil the royal mission

"As was usual in such a situation, the lady slipped from her pure life and got involved with the monk. Things went far and expenses increased One day, the parrots saw the monk entering into the chamber of their mistress The she-parrot thought of preventing him, but the male-parrot advised her patience and silence, But the she-parrot protested, 'In the absence of our master from home, we must see that the sanctity of the home is not violated. We cannot allow this rogue to misbehave We cannot allow a drain of our master's wealth Something must be done at once'

"Bhadra overheard the conversation of the birds and she rushed out with a stick in her hand The she-parrot's life of servitude ended at this moment As she took her out from the cage to kill her, she flew away and regained her former state The male partner remained alone.

"One day, an astrologer came to the merchant's house, and when the lady enquired from him about the merit of the cock, she said, 'He who would eat the crest of the cock would become a king within seven days' The monk heard this and could not check the temptation of becoming a king. So he became insistent that the cock must be killed and cooked and his crest must be served on his plate Bhadra declined 'This one is my husband's pet How can I kill it? When the merchant will call for an explanation, what do I say?'

"But the monk would not listen to any argument and threatened that if his wishes were not fulfilled, he would

leave the house at once The lady was in a dilemma She thought and thought, and at last she agreed The cock was killed and cooked The monk went out to the pond to take his bath. Meanwhile, Sagardatta came back from the school and asked for something to eat As there was nothing else, the mother served the seasoned meat, which, hy chance, contained the cock's crest

"Now, the monk came and sat to eat He looked for the cock's crest, but it was not there 'Where's the crest,' he shouted. 'This is the whole lot, sir,' said the lady. 'I took out a small portion for my son' The monk lost his temper. 'If you have any attachment towards me, take out portions of the crest from your son's stomach and give them to me at once I am not going to pacify till I get them,' the monk thundered.

" 'Sir, I cannot do such a vile thing I cannot kill my own son,' the lady submitted 'I care a fig for how you will do it,' said the monk 'But do you must I must have my thing or I go' This was too difficult a situation for a mother, but in this difficult situation, the mother yielded and the woman won The woman in Bhadra agreed to kill her own son.

"But destiny is above all The boy's maid, Gomati, turned to be an eaves-dropper and she rushed to the school without losing a single moment She took the boy with her and set out for an unknown destination. Sagardatta knew not what the matter was or whither was he being taken The maid with the boy with her walked non-stop for six days and nights, and on the seventh day they reached the city of Champa. Since they were at a safe distance now, they stopped to rest in a park in the city. Just at that time, the king of that city was dead, and he had left no successor. So a search was on to find a suitable successor to the throne. By the consent of the people, Sagardatta was considered to possess the necessary marks of kingship.

and was placed on the throne, and he took the name Dhattribahana.

"At Rajagriha, Bhadra was in a miserable state in the company of the monk The prosperity of the household was gone and the son was missing. Servants were dismissed. The house wore the look of poverty and distress. When Katha returned, he could not reeognise his own home. Only the male parrot was still there. He narrated the whole thing to his master and having thus completed the duration of the spell, he too earned his liberation. The eyes of the merchant had opened by now and he renounced the world and joined the order of monks Bhadra had already earned so much ill fame that she could no longer remain in Rajagriha. In the company of the monk, she fled and took shelter in the city of Champa They took a cottage in the suburb of the city Bhadra now served as a maid in a certain family and the monk became a farm labourer

"In the mean time, Monk Katha came to the city of Champa in the course of his wanderings Bhadra saw him from a distance and recognised him at once She was alarmed to see Katha there and decided to do something at once. One day, the monk came to her cottage to beg. Bhadra served him food, but hid her own ring into the food, which she offered. Then, as the monk moved out, she shouted, 'Thief ! Thief ! He has taken my ring,'

"The woman's shouts attracted a large crowd. Even the police chief came there The ring was recovered from the monk. What an irony ! The monk was arrested and brought to the police station. Luckily, the palace was not very far from that place Maid Gomati heard the noise and came to her window to see what the matter was. As her eyes fell on the monk who was tied fast, she recognised her former master and rushed to the king. Both of them then reached the police station, where the king freed

the monk with his own hands and fell at his feet to beg forgiveness It was a happy union of the father and the son, one in the holy order, and the other the head of the state Bhadra was banished from the city

"On behalf of his subjects, the king welcomed the monk to his city and prayed for his stay there during the monsoon season. Monk Katha could not decline so earnest a request from a worthy son. The king attended his sermons everyday and was greatly inspired This had a great impact on the people, whose spiritual zeal received a great impetus

"But in the world, there are always some low-brows who cannot tolerate other people's good acts or good name They hatched a plot against the monk. They hired a low-born, untouchable woman for their vile project As the rains were over, and the monk was preparing to depart, he halted outside the city boundary He was in the midst of his last sermon to the people of that city, when that harlot made her appearance and asked the monk to arrange for the maintenance of herself and his child whom, she said, she was carrying, before he left

"This came like a sudden bomb-shell to the assemblage which was stunned But the monk didn't lose his equanimity and said in a calm and gentle voice. 'Woman! you know not what you say and to whom All you say is not only malicious but is an utter lie. You should not defile your soul in this manner You should not talk base things about a monk'

"But the woman would not withdraw, and the monk repeated his words once, twice and several times. But they had no effect So, at last, he collected the fiery forces that were within him, and looked at the woman with blood-shot eyes. Said he, 'If this child be mine, then, I say, you have a natural delivery right on this spot If, on the contrary, it is not mine, let it come out by piercing your belly.' Al-

though such words are unbecoming of a monk, he had to use them perforce to meet the situation. Now, as everybody looked on, the child pierced her belly and came out, and in intense pain, the woman fell senseless on the ground. Thus the monk was honorably acquitted, and the people's respect for him reached the highest mark When the lady recovered, the king took her to task and ordered her to tell the truth about the whole conspiracy The woman, who was trembling with fear, gave out the names of all those who were involved in it They too were present in the assembly to witness the discomfiture of the monk and were jubilant over the lady's performance But as the whole thing took a very adverse turn, they looked small, and now fell victim to the king's wrath. They fell at the feet of the monk and begged for their own lives The monk was pacified and withdrew his fiery forces He pleaded on behalf of the guilty and requested the king to withdraw his order, which the latter did." As the story came to its end, Monk Munipati said

"Oh merchant! There's a clear demand in your words that I too mobilise my fiery forces, as Katha did, to establish my innocence. Although such a thing is not desirable for a monk, maybe once in his life-time he has to do it when the situation so demands May I still expect that good sense will dawn on you and I am spared from taking an extreme step!"

At this moment, the merchant's son joined with them, and he got alarmed for the sake of his own safety. So he said to his father, 'Sire! You have wrongly charged a monk who is free from all bonds This monk, you should know, is no ordinary person and he did not give up his whole kingdom to steal your little treasure He must be in possession of great powers, and if perchance he unleashes them we may stand nowhere as it happened to poor Namuchi'

Kunchika said,

'Who was this Namuchi and what happened to him ?'

The son started,

"During the age of Muni Subrata, there reigned in Ujjain a king named Dharmasena who was modest, unassuming and pious Namuchi was his minister. He was a man of great intellect, but at the same time, he was crafty, unscruplous and averse to the Jaina path. Once Muni Subrata came to the city with his monks, and the king came to pay his homage and obeisance. Namuchi was also present in the assembly. Namuchi aired his atheistic views in the assembly and drew a monk, Khullaka by name, into a bitter controversy. The minister was soon cornered by the monk and ridiculed by the people.

"Namuchi took this insult to heart, and set out one night with a sword in his hand to kill the monk who had defeated him. As he reached the gate of the monk's shelter, he was challenged by Sasana Devi who fixed him on the spot. Even when it was morning, everybody saw Namuchi fixed at the gate, with a sword in his hand. People had now no doubt as to why he had come there and they censured him openly. But Namuchi himself had no escape till he tendered a public apology to Sasana Devi and the monks. This he did and obtained his release. After this humiliation however, he could no longer remain there and reached Hastinapur

"Padmottara was the king of Hastinapur at this time. He had two queens, Jwala and Lakshmi, and Jwala was a good *sravika* too. She had two sons, Vishnukumar and Mahapadma, both of whom were fine and accomplished young men. The king was now thinking of abdicating in favour of the elder son, but as Vishnukumar felt no attraction for the kingdom and had himself decided to renounce the world, Mahapadma was named crown-prince to succeed the king. Just at this time, Namuchi reached this kingdom and managed to get the minister's post

"Now, in the neighbourhood of Hastinapur, there lived a band of robbers headed by one Samanta Singha who was a notorious character He had made himself a source of terror to the people of that kingdom, and the crown-prince Mahapadma gave orders for his immediate arrest But all efforts to take him into custody failed In the meantime, reports came that the robbers had looted a very well-to-do village and molested the merchants He had even beaten up the guards, which was a nacked challenge to law and order In the wake of this tragedy, the crown-prince announced a suitable reward to anyone who would help in the arrest of the robber chief, alive or dead

"Namuchi accepted the challenge and responded to the announcement The prince was happy He gave him 100 selected men to help him The whole group secretly moved out one day and reached the neighhourhood of the robber's den at about sun-set The chief had no prior information and lay alone, and was killed in his sleep, The head was at once taken out and placed before the prince The prince received the minister in deep embrace and was going to give him a reward, but the minister declined, saying he would take it later

"Once Queen Jwala organised a car festival and a Jina image was carried in procession At this, Queen Lakshmi organised a rival procession in which a Hindu deity was placed on the chariot The processions were organised outside the city As they reached the city gate, there cropped up a controversy as to which procession would precede in entering into the city As none was ready to yield, the king ordered that none of the processions should move inside the city, but must terminate at the park outside.

"This the crown-prince took as an affront to his own mother, and he fled his kingdom The minister Namuchi joined with him in his excursions Mahapadma conquered many kingdoms with the help of the minister and became

an emperor. Now his father sent an invitation for his early return. When he came back to his city, he was placed on the throne Emperor Mahapadma fulfilled the wishes of his mother by organising a grand Jina procession on a magnificent scale.

"It was about this time that Muni Subrata and his monks reached Hastinapur where Namuchi was the most powerful man, next only to the monarch himself. Namuchi thought of taking revenge for the past insult, whose memory still haunted him. So he came to the king and sought his permission to perform a sacrifice The king agreed The minister also desired that his reward might be given which the king had once promised, and, for this, he requested the king to retire for a month (for a week. according to some texts) and leave the administration in his exclusive charge, without bothering during this period as to how he ran it. To this request too the king agreed.

"The sacrifice started with great pomp and show. Hundreds of holy men came to take part in it and thousands came as spectators Everybody praised highly Namuchi's spiritual zeal. The only exception was Muni Subrata and his group, who did not come and the minister took it as an insult. At once he came to the Acharya and said, 'I order you and your monks to quit at once, If, by to-morrow morning, anyone of your party be found within the limits of this realm, at my command, he will be put to the sword. I entertain no request or protest from your side.'

"The Acharya said that he and his monks could not, according to the sanctions of his order, move out during the rainy season. 'Minister !' said he, 'In giving your order, you should not disrespect the sanctions of my own order. "I know this not,' shouted Namuchi 'My order will be followed to the very letter, and there will be no deviation from it." So saying, he departed,

"It was now a great problem for the Acharya in which the safety of the monks, both individually and collectively, was involved. He called all his monks and said, 'Look, we are in the midst of a crisis Namuchi seems to have some evil design on us He is bent on wiping out our influence from this realm, What should be our duty in this situation ?' After a moment's gap, the Acharya said again, 'This is really a challenge and affront to the entire order. Is there no one in the order who my teach Namuchi a good lesson ? The very existence of the order is at stake at this moment.'

"Discussion started at once within the order as to what should be done in the situation. By unanimous opinion, Muni Vishnukumar, who happend to be the elder brother of the ruling monarch, and who was accomplished in great powers, was considered to be the fittest person for this purpose But, at this moment, he was on Mount Meru immersed in the *kayotsarga* meditation, and the problem was how to reach him there and bring him at once, since time was the most important factor A monk stood up and said, 'I can fly thither and communicate the urgent message to the monk, but I know not how to fly back In view of the urgency, the Acharya gave him leave to go at once, saying that the monk might himself arrange for his return at his convenience.

"The whole thing happened as expected. Vishnukumar came with the monk and stood before Muni Subrata The whole order was enlivened to see him. The Acharya narrated the present difficulty of the order, for which he had been urgently summoned Vishnukumar at once came to the court Everyone at the court stood up at the appearance of the monk, who was himself a prince from this kingdom but the haughty minister did not move. Addressing the minister, the monk said, 'Namuchi ! You should know that these are the rainfall months when, according to our sanctions, the monks cannot move out As the chief minister,

it's your duty to see that the monks are not inconvenienced in any way and arrange for their sojourn in this city. You have not only not done that, instead, you have ordered the monks to leave. This is not becoming of a man of your position.'

"The haughty minister did not relent, he said instead, 'I cannot withdraw my order, but since you have come, I make this concession that I give them space for their stay as big as three steps, if they can manage with it, but you should not make request for more and you should at once move out of my sight'

"It was by now clear to Vishnukumar that the minister would see no reason and it was useless to argue with him. So he decided to meet him on a different plane. He mobilised his power and expanded his body to a tremendous size and shape. Then he covered the ground upto the eastern ocean by one step and that upto the western ocean by the other, and had yet to place his third step, for which there was no more space The universe started to quake at this unusual event So he placed his third step on the minister's head and pushed him down to the underworld, removing for good the menace from the surface of the earth.

"Having fulfilled his assignment, the monk stood before his Acharya. When the whole episode reached the ears of the king, he came to the Acharya and begged to be forgiven. So, my dear father, you should know that even Monk Munipati is in possession of great powers and he can do anything to protect his own honour We should be very careful and not load a false blame on him. Perhaps you know the story of Ghritapusyamitra and Bastrapusyamitra, the two disciples of Acharya Aryaraksita, who were in possession of great spiritual powers.' The merchant confessed his ignorance ahout them and desired to be enlightened. The son started.

"The speciality of Ghritapusyamitra was that wherever he went to beg food, there was a plentiful supply of clarified

butter (*ghee*) even in such arid regions as Avantidesa where the bovine population was scanty Likewise, the presence of Bastrapusyamitra was capable of creating a plentiful supply of cloth in cities and countries like Mathura and Videha, where there was no much production of cloth. These two monks not only kept the order well supplied with these things, but the plenty created by their presence benefitted the common folks as well You should know, father, that Monk Munipati is in no way inferior to either of these, and you should stop troubling him any further."

"The merchant—"But what can I do when I am pretty certain that he has stolen my treasure All I want is that he gives it back I shall have no more reason to cause him trouble"

The son—"Father ! You need change your suspicion. Your treasure has been removed by me and not by the celebrated monk It is in this house. Come with me and I shall show it to you"

At these words, the merchant fell at the monk's feet, and the monk, who is usually an embodiment of forgiveness, responded favourably to the merchant's humble prayer and repentance The merchant was even inspired by his holy words so that he renounced the world and courted monkhood, wherein the soul is the only treasure to be taken care of

ANTUKARI BHATTA

In the city of Avanti, there lived a merchant named Dhana, whose wife's name was Kamalashri. He had a daughter born to him after eight sons. She was named Bhatta. She was loved by everybody in the household and none ever addressed her by the derogatory '*tu*' (you) From this, she took the prefix *an-tu-kari* (one not addressed as '*tu*') before her name. Her education started at eight under diverse teachers, some experts in arts, and others in spiritual matters. When she stepped into her youth, the merchant was on the look-out for a suitable groom for her When Bhatta came to know of this, she announced that she would marry only one who would never disobey her. Otherwise, she preferred to remain a spinster. Now, this was a difficult condition and it was by no means easy to find a man who would be so very submissive to his wife

Bhatta was a real beauty, and reports about her spread far and wide. Many young men wanted to marry her, but were discouraged by her severe condition. Years passed and Bhatta's youth was now fading out. One day, Minister Subuddhi's eyes fell on her and he decided to accept her hand, despite the condition, and made the proposal to her father. The merchant was happy and Bhatta was at last settled in domestic life.

At her new home, Bhatta started as a severe task-mistress. None dared to disobey her, not even the minister. Bhatta ordered her husband to return from his office before sun-down without fail, and the minister agreed. The king noticed this change in the minister's routine and asked him one day about it. The minister was hesitant either to come out with the truth or to make a false statement before

the king, when other courtiers said in joke, "Sire! It's the order of his newly-acquired lady which the minister fulfils. He dares not to disobey." At this the king turned to the minister and said, "Is that right?"

The minister did not hide anything, and this added to the fun. As the minister stood up to go before it was evening, the king detained him. The minister was restless and trembling, but he could say nothing. The king allowed him to go at late hours of the night.

Anger blinds and deprives one of sense. Bhatta was all fire and latched the entrance. The minister knocked and knocked but there was no response for a long time. Then the door opened, but Bhatta departed at a hurried pace without speaking a single word.

This was a sheer folly. To start alone at mid-night could not be a venture free from danger, particularly for a young lady. She fell in the hands of thieves, who were happy to get a nymph-like woman in costly robes and ornaments. They took her to their den and stripped her of all her valuables. Then, clad in ordinary dress, she was passed on as a gift for the chief's use. As the chief approached her, Bhatta thundered, and the thief had no more courage to touch her. But she was not allowed to leave the den either, and she was severely tortured everyday. What an irony of fate for a woman who had spent her life in great care and comfort! Bhatta silently bore physical torture, but did not deviate from the path of purity. It virtually turned out to be a trial of strength between purity and villainy.

The thief's mother saw the ordeal of the captive lady day after day. At last, she said to her son, "My son! This does not seem to be an ordinary woman. In torturing her, you are committing great sins. If she curses you, I am sure, you will be nowhere. So I suggest that in your own interest, you should desist from torturing her, and invite not unnecessary danger."

From that day, the thief stopped his tortures, and after some time, he sold her out to a trader in exchange for a handsome amount. Now, it was the trader's turn to feel attracted towards her and he started seeking her company. But Bhatta was firm like a rock. The trader then started torturing her. Everyday, he contrived to take blood from her body so that the lady soon became pale and weak. Bhatta had a most miserable time.

One day, Bhatta's brother came to the same city. He saw her from a distance and recognised her. He came to the trader to make enquiries about how he came to have her in his house, but the trader did not give him true facts But the little that he came to know about her from the man was enough for him to understand his sister's misery. He at once paid the price to the trader and recovered his sister. He bought good clothes and ornaments for her and took her to his home. When the minister came to know of this, he took the lady back with all honour and dignity due to her.

This brought a major change in Bhatta's life. She was no longer dominant, but became the very embodiment of humility and docility. This earned her great esteem at home and even outside.

Once there was a discussion on this point in heaven, and the king of the gods spoke in very eloquent terms of Bhatta's patience and forgiveness. "None can knock her out from these," said he, One god thought of taking a test and came down to the earth and hid in a corner of Bhatta's house, wholly invisible. It was at this time that two monks came to beg oil for Monk Munipati who had been severely burnt. (Vide P. 54) Bhatta asked her maid to bring the container, but the invisible god pushed it down from her hand. Bhatta remained calm and asked the maid to bring the second container, which was also pushed down in the same manner

And this happened for the third time. Now, the monks were about to go, telling the lady not to disturb her mind because of the loss, nor to be angry with the maid after they were gone. Bhatta said,

"Oh monks! I bear anger towards none. I have myself drunk the bitterest cup of life on account of this passion, and I know perhaps more than anyone else where it leads to and how much it costs But I am sorry I couldn't make the offer If you kindly give me a chance, I shall go myself and bring it for you"

The monks stood as Bhatta went in. The god tried his prank with her too, but was no match to her purity and courted defeat After the monks were gone, the god made his appearance and begged to be forgiven He restored the oil in the three containers, so that nothing was really wasted While departing, he said,

"Great lady! I am overwhelmed at thy purity and equanimity Ask for a boon"

To this Bhatta said, "Oh *deva*! Thank you so much for your kind and appreciatory words But I feel no want and I am contented with all that I have I need no more"

The god expressed his admiration for her and departed for his celestial abode.

KAMAGHATA

There was a city named Sripur of which King Jitari was the ruling monarch His minister Matisagar was really an ocean of intellect, wisdom and statesmanship and was held by all in the highest esteem The king was very fond of his minister and he took him into confidence even in personal matters. Often they discussed religion. The king was an atheist and to him virtue was a myth and penance was a perpetual condemnation into self-created misery. He was a 'success man' in modern sense to whom success meant affluence, amassing a large fortune by any means whatsoever. To court misery in the name of religion was, to him, the height of idiocy

According to the minister, religion was not a thing that could be imposed, but was something inherent. When one practised forgiveness, fellow-feeling, etc., he did so not so much to help others as to help himself. And so with penance It was no invitation to misery, but a supreme means for the purification of the soul, a companion of virtue.

As discussions like this were frequent, the king acquired the nick-name of Papa-buddhi (one whose intellect is vice) and the minister acquired the nickname of Dharma-buddhi (one whose intellect is virtue). The king said one day,

"Look here I fight with other kings and defeat them. I subdue their men and usurp their treasure and territory. I go often for hunting. According to your view, these are evil deeds. But what do I get? Fame, fortune, influence, men and money You are a pious man, but you haven't got as much wealth and influence as I have. Even what you call

your own has been bestowed by me So, you see, good man, where you and your religion stand. In such a situation, how do I accept your contention that religion is the giver of the greatest prosperity ?"

The king added in the end

"If religion really leads to happiness, I want a proof of it. You go from here to some unknown land empty-handed. There you will realise how much religion helps you If you come back with affluence and influence, then I shall accept your stand as correct "

The minister at once accepted the challenge and prepared to depart He moved out without taking anything with him He was on a long and uncertain trek using his legs alike during the day as well as the night He would not rest even in the stillness of the night, He came across a demon in a forest who was hungry for seven days The demon jumped on him, but the minister did not lose his nerves. Rather, in a tone full of affection, he said, "Oh beloved of the gods ! I am at thy service. If my body satisfies thy hunger, I shall deem it to be a great good fortune on my part But I have one submission to make to thee I am out on an urgent mission. If thou helpeth me in its fulfilment, I shall return to thee at once and await thy pleasure "

The demon was hungry but the minister's words cast a spell on him. So he released him and the minister resumed his journey It was the very early hour of the dawn when the minister reached a park outside a city There he saw a temple dedicated to Lord Risabha, and so he stopped there and worshipped the Lord. The guard of the temple was a *yaksa* named Kapardi He was greatly impressed by the minister's devotion. When the minister had completed his worship and prayer, the *yaksa* offered him a wish-fulfilling pitcher named Kamaghata and explained to him its speciality.

He came across a demon in a forest

The minister was happy to receive the pitcher but he knew not how to carry it The *yaksa* realised his difficulty and said, "Don't you worry about it. It will follow you without being visibile to others But you will see it quite all right."

With such an important acquisition, the minister now turned his steps homeward The demon was waiting for him at the same spot He recognised the minister at once and said,

"Good fellow ! You remember your promise. I am waiting here for you"

Minister—' Sir, I am at thy service Accept my body as thy food But I have one misgiving You know, this body is a warehouse of impurities, and I feel hesitant to dedicate it for thy use. If, however, you kindly agree, I can procure plenty of dainties and delicacies for your consumption, and you can have as much of them as you please till your hunger is fully satisfied."

Demon—"I don't mind that But the supply must be really plentiful If by any chance my hunger is not satisfied, then I shall not spare you "

Within a short while, there were hundreds of dished full of dainties and delicacies served before the demon. He ate to his heart's content. and still the supply was in tact It had virtually become non-ending. The demon now enquired about the magical powers of the man. The minister who never spoke a lie in his life gave out the full account about Kamaghata, his magic pitcher.

The demon now wanted to have it , but he knew, unless he gave something in return, the fellow would not be prepared to part with it So he said,

"Hellow ! If you give me that pitcher, I shall give you a more powerful thing '

"What's that ?"

"That is a magic wand before which no weapon is effective. It is capable to carry out your order and return, It is a divine thing. You accept this divine wand and give me the pitcher."

The demon further added,

"You see, with this pitcher supplying me with food and drink, it will no longer be necessary for me to kill living beings. So I shall give up animal slaughter for good and be a good fellow."

"Well, sir. everything is at thy service, though I need caution thee that because of thy impious habits, this may not remain with thee for long,"

"Don't you worry about that. You see, from to-day on, I shall be a pious good fellow. So it must stay with me, You give it to me,"

So the minister exchanged his pitcher for the wand and resumed his homeward journey

Next day, when it was time for lunch, the minister asked the wand to procure food for him Expressing its inability, the wand said.

"Sir, this is beyond my capacity. Please commission me for something else "

The minister said at once,

"Then you go and get me my pitcher back."

The wand rose up in the sky and started at once

The demon had kept the pitcher in a cave and shut its door and himself kept the vigil from outside. All on a sudden, he saw the wand return and start beating him fiercely. This made the demon stand aside to save his skin. The wand then picked up the pitcher and returned to the minister who was happy to see his things back. The minister welcomed the pitcher and asked how it was in the custody of the demon during the last night. The pitcher said,

"Sir, he is an impious fellow, and I had no rest with him. In future, please do not leave me with an impious person"

The minister had then a very sumptuous meal after which he picked up the wand and the pitcher and started again.

Success follows success for a pious man. The minister met a party of pilgrims who were on their way back from Mt. Rebata and Mt Satrunjaya He thought of entertaining the party with a grand feast So he made an invitation to the leader of the group, but the leader declined the invitation For, he could not be sure how this man without anyone and anything worthwhile with him could entertain such a big group The party now lit the oven to cook food. But, as desired by the minister, there was a heavy shower and the oven went out and could not be lit again. The minister repeated his invitation. The pilgrims stared at each other. They knew not if the fellow was mad or jesting at their cost. But, since, in any case, there would be no food, they agreed to accept the invitation in order to see the outcome of it. The minister then directed them to another place where, he said, all arrangements were complete The pilgrims were surprised at the grand reception and sumptuous food that were awaiting for them there. In fact, they had never seen so many dainties and delicacies in their life. Food was served to them in golden dishes and everybody ate to his heart's content.

When the feast was over and the pilgrims sat down to rest, discussion started on the grand arrangement which had been made on such a superhuman scale in such a forlorn place. When they asked the minister about it, he told them all about his magic pitcher. At this, the leader of the group said,

"Sir, I have in my possession a couple of wonderful things, a *chamara* and a royal umbrella. They help one

to recover at once from disease, poison and wound caused by some weapon You take these two from me and give me the magic pitcher. That will help me to feed these people. And besides, you strike a good bargain, since you get two magic things in exchange for one."

Minister—"Sir, divine things stay with one to whom they have been given. They do not stay with others."

The leader—"Don't you worry, sir. I have so much virtue to my credit that the pitcher cannot get away from me."

So the exchange was done and the two departed in their respective directions

It was noon next day when the minister was hungry and the wand was commissioned again to recover the pitcher The wand recovered the pitcher from the pilgrims and returned with it.

With all his priceless acquisitions, the minister was now back home He had a very effective trip and he had wonderful things in his possession with which he could acheive anything All this was the outcome of virtue.

The king heard all this and now he started thinking about some other plan to test the minister's luck. He got two shaddocks and inside one of them he placed valuable gems worth about 1,25,000 gold coins. Then he gave them to one of his trusted valets instructing him to keep them for sale in some fruit stall, and then to keep his eye on the buyer.

This was done. It was an accident that the minister's wife had just come to the market. She liked the shaddock containing gems very much and took it home. She placed it before the minister. As the minister peeled out the skin, the glittering gems came out to his great surprise. He deemed it to be a matter of fresh good luck.

The matter was reported to the king and he was very much surprised at the coincidence.

One night, when everybody was in his bed, there came up a large seven-storeyed mansion in the city, Even the king's mansion bore no comparison with this Sweet music was being emitted from the mansion and this filled up the whole city. The king saw it from his palace window, but he knew not how so suddenly the mansion had come up in the city and to whom did it belong

In the morning, the minister came to the palace, and presented the king with a dish full of very costly gems The king's surprise knew no limit Said he,

"Minister ! Where did you get all these ?"

"From virtue, sir "

"Last night, I saw a wonderful mansion in the city It was emitting fine music, and, I guess, some theatrical performances were going on inside. Was it one of your own doings ?"

"You are very correct, sir, in your guess "

The king had a curiosity to see the mansion from inside So he said,

"I would like very much to have my lunch in that mansion some day When it may be convenient to you, please let me know of it "

"Sir ! It is my good fortune that you intend to pay a visit there But why should you intend to go there alone or with a few attendants only I invite the entire royal household to do me the honour to accept my invitation for a lunch And if it so suits your convenience, I invite you all this very day I am sure, there will be no difficulty "

This touched the king s pride A small man bragging so much He accepted the invitation for the same day.

Meanwhile the king sent his men to see what preparations were going on. They came back and reported that there was virtually nothing.

The king had now no doubt that the minister must have gone mad. He thought that he had done a foolish thing by accepting invitation for so many. Just then the minister turned up and said,

"Sir! Food is ready. I invite you all to come at once."

"Minister! Are you joking with me? I have information that there is absolutely no arrangement there and you invite such a large crowd for lunch."

"Your Majesty! If you will do me the honour to come with me but once, you will see everything with your own eyes. There will be nothing wanting to entertain the royal household. I assure you, sir"

The king started, with one thousand men following him. He was giving final touches to a plan to chastise the minister very severely in case he failed. Now they arrived at the main entrance to the mansion and the whole party was surprised to see its beautiful decoration There were hundreds of receptionists who received the royal guests. As the king proceeded in, he had surprise mounted upon surprise. Such a grandeur would put to shame any king on earth And now at last they were in the dining hall. And what a supply of dainties and delicacies, their quantity and variety! It was a real wonder. When the lunch was over, the minister presented everybody with a divine robe All had the same query in mind, how did it all happen? It took expression in the words of the king

"Minister! What divine power you have in your possession? What has made possible all this?"

"Your Majesty! It's all the doing of virtue. You sent me abroad pennyless and I have acquired a magic pitcher. It has great powers. All that you see are due to it, and no credit is due to me."

"But such a precious thing must remain in the kings' palace."

"But sir, this does not stay with impious people.

"Don't you worry. It will stay with me If you do not wilfully surrender it to me, I shall use force to acquire it and put you to severe torture."

The minister handed over the pitcher to the king The king placed it in a guarded vault. The guards were ordered to keep an all-time vigil.

Next day, the minister commanded the wand to get back the pitcher and the wand proceeded at once The guards were no match for the wand So the pitcher was again restored to the minister. The king now saw that the pitcher would not remain with him He was sorry at the plight of his men of the guard who had been severely beaten by the wand

The minister now applied the *chamara* and cured the men of their wounds Then he said to the king,

"So, now, sir, you recognise the merit and power of virtue"

But the effect on the king was short-lived One day he said to the minister,

"Minister! What you have demonstrated was a sort of magic power, and I do not think it has anything to do with religion. Even sinful men can practise magic However, I shall be convinced of your power if you surrender the pitcher, the wand, the *chamaro* and the umbrella, go out to some unknown land in the company of your wife and come back affluent."

The minister was a simple-hearted fellow. He did not see through the king's motives and agreed to abide by the kings wishes He surrendered all his things to the king and set out in the company of his wife. Walking non-stop they arrived at a city named Nagpur which was near the sea coast They halted at the park. There they came to know that a merchant from that city, Sagardatta by name, was soon going out on a voyage to distant islands and

before he set sail, he was offering ,cash to all seekers. As the minister was pennyless, he left his wife in the park and came to the ship. There was already a long queue of seekers, and before the minister's turn came, the ship set sail. The minister took a chance and jumped into the ship. The merchant was surprised to see how daring the man was and gave him a few coins. Now, as the minister turned to jump back, the ship was already in deep water. So he had no other alternative but to remain in the ship. Very soon a deep intimacy grew between the merchant and the minister, and the merchant was impressed by the man's wit. The merchant gave him the job of keeping the account books in his establishment.

Elsewhere, the minister's wife, Vinayasundari, was waiting in the park for her husband's return, but he did not come back. After waiting for a very long time, she moved out in search of him. But all her searches were in vain. At last she took shelter in the house of a potter in that city, Till the return of her husband, however, she undertook a few vows which were as follows .

She would lie on the ground. She would take no bath. She would not put on coloured garments. She would not decorate herself with flowers. She would not use cosmetics. She would not chew betel leaves. She would not take dainties, dalicacies, milk and milk products, spices, etc. She would use no cushion. She would never move out of the house except under emergency. She would not sit in a balcony She would not participate in social ceremonies. She would be restrained in her talks with others

Thus she spent her days.

The merchant and the minister arrived at Ratnadvipa. In that island, there was a city named Surpur where reigned King Sakrapurandara. The merchant unloaded his wares and stored them in the warehouses. In business

matters, the merchant was now wholly dependent on the minister. In fact, the minister was now looking after the whole business, and the merchant was having a nice time in this new city.

Soon the merchant developed a great intimacy with a fallen woman in that city and started living with her. Whatever money he needed was sent to him by the minister. This the woman noticed and she thought that the man who was actually running the merchant's business must be very wealthy She now made plans to develop intimacy with the minister so that she would have no limit to her wealth. But in this she failed. The minister did not respond to her overtures.

Soon the minister became well-known in the city for his honesty and uprightness and skill in business

A tank was being dug in the city at the command of the king A few inscriptions came to hand but none could read their content This increased the curiosity of the king He announced a reward of half the kingdom and the princess herself to anyone who would decipher the inscriptions When the minister came to know of it, he came to the court and read out the inscriptions which contained the following message

From where these copper inscriptions are found, as one moves seven cubits towards the east and digs the ground waist-deep, he comes across a slab of stone beneath which is hidden a treasure of 19,99 999 *gold coins*

The king at once came to the spot and acted as per the instruction, and to his great joy, he was in possession of the great treasure The king now gave half the kingdom and the princess, Saibhagyasundari, to the minister and also bestowed on the couple a vast dowry.

Rarest are those who are happy at their friends' good fortune ; even those who would be indifferent are not many ;

but largest in number are those who are jealous of their friends' good fortune Merchant Sagardatta was in the last group. When he saw the esteem in which his own assistant, the minister, was being held at the court and in the whole city, and the vast amount of wealth he had amassed within such a short time, he felt jealous of him One day, he sold out the remainder of his wares and announced his decision to leave the city The minister also welcomed the idea, since he was now keen to return home. So the ship was filled up with local specialities. The king bestowed on his son-in-law the money-value of half kingdom, which was as large as eight ship-loads. These, added to the minister's own, made a total of 40 ships As against these, the merchant had only one vessel Then on one fine day the ships set sail.

One day the merchant called his friend from his own ship and said,

"My friend ! Our intimacy does not grow when we are moving in two separate ships. Let us be on board the same ship, dine together, live together and play together. In this manner alone we can have a good time."

The minister was a simpleton and he apprehended no danger from the merchant. So he accepted the invitation and came to Sagardatta's ship Throughout the day, they talked of various things. In the evening, they sat on the roof to enjoy the sun-set. The night was now advanced and the entire sea-scape was covered with a pitchy darkness Only the stars were twinkling in the far-off sky. The two friends were still absorbed in deep conversation. Sagardatta took advantage of the situation and pushed the minister down into the sea. But even in the midst of this great calamity, the minister did not forget to utter the holy *namokar* and soon he felt something floating near at hand. It was a big log of wood. The minister held it fast and kept afloat.

Meanwhile, the ships moved on without knowing what had happened to their unfortunate master.

After the ships had gone to a safe distance, the merchant raised an alarm about his friend. He was searched in all the ships but was nowhere to be found. As it was the dead of night, nothing was visible on the sea. So the minister was declared to have been lost.

With his plot turned into a success, the merchant was hilarious At one stroke, he was now the master of all, including the beautiful princess. But he must first win the princess' confidence. He came to her and spoke a few words by way of consoling her Saubhagyasundari was an intelligent lady and she took no time to read into the whole situation. Sagardatta now started sending various proposals to the lady, but she turned them down At last, the ships entered into the harbour of Gambhirpur. The princess at once alighted from her ship, went straight to the temple of Arhat Risabha, took shelter into it and bolted it from inside,

Elsewhere, the minister supported by the log of wood safely reached the shore. There was a city nearby, but it appeared to be a deserted one. It was a vast city with many mansions and shops but there was no human being. He walked through the streets, till at last he came to a big palace which apparently belonged to the king But it was empty too. At the sixth floor was spread a cot on which sat a she-camel. Not far from her there lay two types of collyrium and two sticks. He picked up a stick and applied the white collyrium to the camel's eyes, and lo, soon the animal changed into a fine damsel. She asked him to take a seat.

The minister was greatly surprised. In one breath, he asked her many questions as to who she was, who were her parents. what situation she was in, what city was that and why the city was without a population,

The damsel shed tears of sorrow and said,

"Noble sir ! That would be a pretty long story. But

here your life will be in great danger. So you flee at once. I do not desire you to plant yourself into difficulty."

But the minister was unperturbed. In an undaunted voice he said,

"Fear? What fear? For one who is undaunted, no fear is big enough."

"Sir! Here lives a monstress. She is very hard and cruel It is about time for her coming here. So it is better that you go away at once."

"But I want to meet her. If you know her full story, please tell me about it."

The damsel gave the account as follows

"King Bhim of this city was my father, He belonged to the *tapasa* order, One day a *tapasa* monk came to the city He had fasted for a month My father invited him to the palace. I was entrusted with the duty to help the monk. But the monk was not a clean man. He was charmed at my beauty. At night, as he was approaching my apartment, the guards on duty put him under arrest and produced him before the king. The king found him guilty and ordered him to be put to death Dying in distress and agony, he has been born as a monstress. She killed my father, the king The residents of this city fled for their life As the monk had attachment for me, the monstress did not kill me. But you see, I am her captive. When she goes out, she turns me into a camel. But she comes everyday and makes enquiries about me. Now, sir, she may come at any moment. I would like you to hide yourself somewhere."

The princess stopped for a moment and then added,

"One day, I told the monstress that she had spoiled my life and made me lonely and miserable. I asked her to kill me too. But she told me that she was looking for a suitable

groom for me, and as soon as she would find one, she would settle me with him. It is quite possible, sir, that she may like you. And if that happens, then you ask her to bestow on you some superhuman powers like moving through the sky, and some magic objects, viz, an enchanted cot, a pair of garlands made of divine gems, a stick of white *kaner* and the priceless *ratna-manjusa*.

Just then the monstress rushed in The minister silently slipped aside without being seen by her. The monstress held a friendly chat with the princess When she found that the monstress was in a good mood, she reminded her about her potential husband. Said the monstress.

"Ah! I am still looking for one But I have not yet found any worthy of thee"

"But I have one in view if you accept him.

"Why should I not if he is really worthy? Where's he?"

At this moment, the minister made his appearance. The monstress liked him at once and married the princess with him The minister took opportunity to ask for the special powers and gifts which the monstress bestowed on him gladly. Then she went away.

The princess now suggested that they must leave the place at once She had no desire to live in that deserted city.

"But I have no idea of the route. How do we go from here to my own city?"

"Don't you worry about that, I have an idea. We sit together on the magic cot with the two garlands round our neck, and you strike the cot with the *kaner* stick. It will at once go up in the sky and land us wherever we desire to get down. But there is one obstacle.

If the monstress comes to know that we have escaped, she will at once pursue us and stop us. But this has to be prevented. As the monstress comes near us, you brandish the *kaner* stick so that she would not hold on for long but take to her heels. But display no sympathy towards her, or, we shall be undone"

Thus the whole plan was ready and the two started. When at the appropriate hour the monstress came to the palace, neither the princess was there nor her man. She realised at once that she had been befooled. So she pursued them and soon overtook them. But the minister brandished the red stick and the monstress disappeared.

The cot descended at the park in the city of Gambhirpur. The minister left the princess in the park and himself went to the town to fix up an apartment. Just then a prostitute came to the park.

As her eyes fell on the princess, she came to her and said, "My daughter! Who are you? Wherefrom have you come? Who is your husband? Why are you alone?"

When the princess acquainted the woman with all about herself, the woman said at once

"What a piece of goodluck! You are my own sister-in-law and the minister is my own brother. I have sent him home and have come to receive you. So you come with me at once."

So the princess went with the woman to her home. But her first impression about the place was not good. She said,

"Where is my husband?"

"Don't you worry about a single husband. Many husbands will visit you here everyday. Live a happy life and enjoy with them."

These words the harlot said jokingly, and the princess now realised the real position she was in.

She shut herself in a room. The harlot offered her all inducements to open the door but she would listen to nothing.

Soon the news spread all over the town that a woman had confined herself in a room in the house of the harlot. The king issued forth an announcement to the effect that anyone who would be able to induce the lady to open the door would be duly rewarded. The minister heard the announcement and felt at once that this might be his own wife So he responded and came to the harlot's home. There he gave a full account of the lady's past. Now the princess had no doubt that the narrator was none other than her own husband She opened the door and came out to meet him In recognition of the minister's power, the king now gave him half of his kingdom and the hand of his own daughter With such an important position, it was now not difficult for the minister to institute a search for his other two wives. Soon he came to know that two more ladies were confined in their own rooms and he felt that these might be his other two wives, Vinayasundari and Saubhagyasundari. When the minister gave them a complete account of each, both the ladies opened their doors to meet their dear husband. In this manner, the minister recovered all his three wives

When the king came to know of Sagardatta's treacherous behaviour, he compelled him to return the minister's portion of the treasure. The harlot that had stolen the princess was exiled from the town. The minister was thus happy once again

One night, he thought of going back to his former king Papabuddhi and teach him a lesson. He took out a vast army and beseized his kingdom. The king was taken a prisoner and was brought before the minister. The minister said,

"Sir, do you recognise me? Are you still in need of a demonstration of the power of virtue?"

The king was very much ashamed to see his minister. Henceforth he gave up his atheistic ideas and became converted to the religious path. Thus the minister's own life served as the most visible proof of the power of religion in a man's life and created an inducement in others to lead a pious life.

PUNYASAR

In the land of Bharata, there was a city named Gopalaka. Sresthi Purandar lived in that city. The name of his wife was Punyasri He was a pious man and was held in great esteem at the court But Purandar had no child and so he had no joy in his mind He was advised by his relatives and friends to take another wife, but he never welcomed the proposal. One day, he propitiated the family goddess and said unto her,

"Oh goddess ! My forefathers and myself have always worshipped thee with devotion and offerings. But if my family line ends with me, then there will be none to worship thee So, oh goddess, be kind to tell me with the help of thy *avadhi* knowledge whether or not I shall have a son."

The goddess said,

"You will have a son, but it is no time yet for that. But deviate not from the path of religion"

This assertion of the goddess refixed Purandar on the spiritual path with great steadfastness A few years passed like this At last, one night, Punyasri saw the moon in a dream. She was happy and shared the content of her dream with her husband. The *sresthi* was happy too. "It portends to the arrival of a son in the family," said he

The dream came true, and Punyasri gave birth to a male child. Grand feasts were organised in his honour. Offers were freely made to all seekers. As the boy was born after so much propitiation, he was named Punyasar.

At five, he was sent to school. The same school was attended by a girl named Ratnasundari who was the daughter of Sresthi Ratnasar. The girl was somewhat naughty and was fond of playing pranks on others. She often quarrelled with Punyasar, but Punyasar did not like it. One day, the matter reached an extreme on a remark by Punyasar which was,

"After all you are a woman, and you shall be a slave unto some man"

This evoked a sharp and prompt rebuff from the girl:

"But that man will be worthy of my hand, and not a worthless person like you."

"Then these are my last words: I MUST MARRY YOU AND TEACH YOU A GOOD LESSON. Take it for certain that this is my firm resolve."

Ratnasundari protested:

"No one can win another's heart through compulsion. Marriage is a union of hearts. The sort of resolve you have made only ends in disaster."

Punyasar came back home. He made it clear to his parents that unless he was married with Ratnasundari, the daughter of Sresthi Ratnasar, he would not touch food.

Said his parents,

"You are yet too young for marriage. It is time for you to study. To talk of marriage at this age does not sound decent"

"I am not in a hurry to marry, but the betrothal must be completed right now.

Now Purandar came to Ratnasar's house and revealed the purpose of his coming. As Purandar was a respected person of his community, Ratnasar could not reject his proposal. But Ratnasundari who heard the conversation rejected the proposal at once.

Ratnasar understood that there must be something behind this refusal by his daughter So he said to Purandar,

"Sir ! Take no offence at the girl's words. She is yet too young. When she is in proper mood, I shall obtain her consent. So far as I am concerned, I heartily welcome your proposal"

Purandar came back and said to his son,

"I wonder why you are so much after this girl. She is not fit for our family. She is extremely out-spoken and sharp-tongued She will never be a right acquisition to the family, nor will you ever be happy with her So I suggest, you give up the idea."

"I am determined, sir, to marry her."

Meanwhile, Punyasar propitiated the family goddess, promising her a grand offering on the fulfilment of his wishes The goddess appeared before him and said,

"Young man ! Don't be in a hurry Do your duties now. In due course, you will have your wishes fulfilled."

Now, Punyasar devoted himself to his studies and grew into a fine and accomplished young man But despite his many fine qualities, he became an addict to gambling His father gave repeated warnings but these had absolutely no effect on the young man He always staked heavy amounts and played regularly One day he lost a lakh, but he did not have so much money with him. In his house, however, there was a costly ornament of a similar worth which belonged to the king and which the king had pawned with the merchant. Punyasar took it out secretly to meet his liability Shortly after this, the king sent for the ornament The *sresthi* looked for it, but it was not there He had now no doubt that this must have been removed by his son. When he asked his son about it, he confessed everything. The *sresthi* was now in a very awkward position. He turned to his son and said,

Ratnasundari rejected the proposal at once

"You get out of my house. You will be received back only when you come with the ornament. Otherwise, I don't want to see your face "

This was a great shock for the young man. Silently he moved out from his home. At night, he took shelter in the hollow of a banyan tree.

When, at night, the *sresthi's* wife enquired about her son, the *sresthi* gava a very angry reply :

"He is a wicked fellow Don't talk about him. He has stolen the king's ornament So I have turned him out."

"What ?" said the affectionate mother, "You have turned him out at this hour of the night ? What will happen to him ? Go and bring him back at once "

Purandar searched the whole town, but he did not find his son So he dared not come back. The lady sat at her door fixing her eyes on the street, but without her son and without her husband Thought she,

"The *sresthi* acted foolishly in turning out the boy, and I have acted foolishly in turning out my man "

Seated in the hollow, Punyasar saw two divine damsels arrive there One of them said,

"It ia a lovely night I feel like strolling leisurely "

The second said,

"I don't like an aimless stroll If there is something interesting anywhere, we may go there."

"If that be your desire, then we should go to Ballabhpur In that city, a *sresthi* named Dhana has seven daughters from his wife whose name is Dhanavati The daughters are named Dharmasundari, Dhanasundari, Kamasundari, Muktisundari, Bhagyasundari, Saubhagya-sundari and Gunasundari, For getting suitable groom for his daughters, the *sresthi* propitiated Lambodara

(Ganesh), the god of Success. The god appeared before him and said. "The seventh night from to-day is very auspicious. You make your preparations. On the seventh night, two divine damsels will come to the marriage pandal. They will be followed by a young man. He will be the groom for your girls.' To-night is that seventh night. So let us go to Ballabhipur and see who this groom is. Let us ride on this tree. This will make our journey comfortable."

Seated on the tree, the damsels arrived at the park outside the city. As the tree stood on the ground, the damsels came down and proceeded towards the marriage pandal. Punyasar came out last and followed the damsels.

Outside the temple of Lambodara, Sresthi Dhana had made all preparations and was waiting with the members of his family, friends and invitees for the arrival of the damsels followed by the groom. The damsels stepped inside the pandal and took their seats. When the *sresthi* saw a young man following the damsels, he came to receive him and explained to him the whole position.

Since it was so ordained by the god, Lambodara, Punyasar agreed to marry the seven girls. He was at once clad in ceremonial robes and the marriage was performed. Then the whole party with Punyasar came to the *sresthi's* house. The seven sisters knew nothing about this man. One of them said, "Sir ! How much educated you are ?"

Punyasar felt awkward. So instead of giving a straight answer, he said,

"Happiness comes neither to a profound scholar nor to a fool. Keeping this in view, I have followed the middle path.'

The girls felt puzzled at his reply and did not understand what he meant. Meanwhile, Punyasar was feeling restless to get back to the tree in time. So, on some pretext he wanted to go out. Gunasundari escorted him till the

door. She saw that he scribbled something on the wall. But she did not pay particular attention to it and returned to her room.

No sooner was he outside the house than Punyasar came to the tree at a hurried pace. He was in time, since the damsels had not yet come back. So he took his seat in the hollow. After some time, the damsels came back and sat on the tree, and the tree started back at once. It took no time to come back to its own place.

After sun-rise, Punyasar stepped out from the hollow of the tree. Purandar too had reached the same spot in search of him. He was surprised to see his son in ceremonial robes. When at last the two returned home, the *sresthi's* wife heaved a sigh of relief. When the parents heard the full account from their son, they were happy at his good luck.

Punyasar had now enough money to recover the king's ornament and return it to the king. The *sresthi's* prestige was thus saved. Punyasar was now free from his gambling habit and devoted himself exclusively to his family line.

Elsewhere, the seven girls were waiting in the room for the return of their husband. But when he did not come back for a long time, they felt restless. Gunasundari came to the door where she had left him and looked around; but there was none. She came back and reported it to her sisters. Thie was a great shock to the girls, the more so, since they had never enquired who the man was or wherefrom he came but blindly relied on the words of the god. And now! The man had fled with many valuable things. They had now no doubt that this was a rogue who had come with a motive.

Gunasundari recollected that the man scribbled something on the wall. There she saw written a couplet as follows :

From Gopalaka did I come by divine grace
And after marrying seven girls thither do I return.

She came back to her sisters and reported about the couplet, adding,

"How far can he go? Even if he hides in the underworld, I must find him out."

Gunasundari dressed herself as a young man and moved out promising to come back within six months on completion of her mission. If she failed, she said, she would consecrate her body to the flames.

Named as Gunasundar and dressed as a man, she came to Gopalaka. Gunasundar called on the king and won his favour by giving him a costly present. Gunasundar now started his business in the same town and came to be acquainted with Punyasar. But this did not throw any light on the problem beyond this that the people came to know that a young merchant from Ballabhipur was in the city on business. The merchant was educated, intelligent and handsome, Somehow Ratnasundari heard the report about him and asked her father to see if this merchant was suitable for her.

Now Ratnasar came to Gunasundar and made the proposal. To Gunasundar this sounded absurd. He tried to get out on some pretext. But Ratnasar was desperate. He said,

"Sir! My daughter is keen to have you for her husband. So please do not decline the proposal."

Gunasundar reluctantly agreed. The two were married on a suitable day.

When Punyasar came to know that the girl betrothed to him has been married to another man, he became furious. He picked up his sword, came before the family deity, and pretending to chop his head with his own hand, he said,

"Mother! You have ruined me. If you were not capable enough to help me, you should have been frank

about it so that I could have tried some other means. A girl betrothed to me has been married to another ! Well, it has been a great insult to me. I cannot bear it. I must end my life in your presence."

In an effort to console the aggrieved young man, the goddess said,

"My son ! Have patience What has happened is good for you You should not end your life like this."

"But, mother, she is now another man's wife. How do I console myself ? And it is a sin even to look on her as a woman."

"Just patiently observe as things unfold themselves. Gunasundari is your wife."

The goddess disappeared. Punyasar was now thinking :

"Gunasundari is my wife. Who is she ?"

Six months were already out and Gunasundari was not yet successful in her quest. She could not share her problem with anyone. At last, she decided to end her life by entering into a burning pyre. The news soon spread all over the town, but people did not know why the young merchant was after such a terrible thing. They rushed to the spot to dissuade him from such a ghastly deed. Even the king came, and the leading businessmen of the city. The king asked why he was determined to end his life in that terrible way, to which the young man said,

"Sir ! I blame none for this. But it is my ill-luck, and my ill-luck demands the sacrifice of my life."

The young merchant moved steadily towards the pyre. The king shouted,

"Is there anyone who has sufficient hold on this young man and who can save him ? I cannot bear this ghastly thing being committed within my kingdom."

People from the crowd shouted back :

" Punyasar alone may have the necessary hold."

Now Punyasar stepped forward and held the hand of the young man. Said he,

"Good friend! Have you gone mad? You are a bright young man with a brilliant future. What you are going to do is hardly befitting you. I make an earnest appeal to you to give up the idea of entering into the blazing pyre. I hope, you will consider my request. But if you are still adamant, then that will be the saddest thing for us."

"But, sir, I do not see anyone to whom I may state my problem."

"Can it be so? What you say will put the entire humanity to ridicule. Come, let me know your problem."

Gunsundar stopped for a moment and searched for something. Then he took out a piece of paper, and advancing it towards Punyasar, he said,

"Sir, did you ever write this?"

"Why? This is my own composition. But where did you get this? Who are you?"

Gunasundar recounted the story in brief. The moment of grief turned out to be a moment of happiness. All's well that ends well.

It was now a problem as to what would happen to Ratnasundari. By a ruling given by the king, she was to be Punyasar's wife.

The six sisters had meanwhile come from Ballabhipur on completion of six months. Thus Punyasar started at once with a large harem.

Once Acarya Jnanasagar came to the city. People went out to pay their homage and obeisance. Sresthi Purandar raised a point about his own son,

"Holy sir ! What has been the pious *karma* of my son by virtue of which he has acquired such a large harem so soon in his life ?" Throwing light on this point, the learned Acharya said,

"In his previous birth, he was named as Kulaputra and he lived at Nitipur. He was initiated into the order of monks by Acharya Sudharma. Monk Kulaputra was no ordinary person. He was ever alert in the practice of controls and restraints and in the observance of religious prescriptions. But he was somewhat lax about the control of his body. In any case, he earned great merit and was born in heaven. The same soul is now your son. As he was vigilant in the observance of seven prescriptions, he has acquired seven wives during one night. But as he was lax about the control of his body, his eighth wife has come after much difficulty."

The Acharya concluded by saying,

"In observing spiritual prescriptions, one should not allow himself to be a victim of confusion or laxity."

The words of the Acarya inspired Purandar to renounce the world and join the holy order. Punyasar courted the vows of a devoted follower and lived a worthy life for many years. In his old age, he too joined the holy order and made great spiritual progress.

GLOSSARY

Ahimsa—The first and foremost among the Jaina vows, meaning abstention from slaughter, injury or harm.

Arta,dhyana—The lowest form of meditation as identified by the Jainas Its object is two-fold, viz., a desire to get rid of an undesired thing, and a desire to get back a dear and coveted thing. This characterises the thinking of all human beings.

Bhante—A form of address to the *acharya*.

Brahma—The Creator-god of the Hindu pantheon.

Chaturdasi—Fourteenth day in each fortnight which is particularly important for the practice of austerities like fasting, giving up food at night and fortnightly confession

Deva Dharanendra—Protecting deity of Tirthankar Parsva himself the lord of the *nagas* (snakes).

Ganadhara Kesi—Fourth Acharya in the line of Parsva, a contemporary of Mahavira. He had a long discussion with Ganadhara Gautama of the order of Mahavira which resolved the differences between the two sects of the *nirgranthas* who were united thereafter.

Karmā—Substantive force, matter in subtle form.

Kayotsarga—A standing posture of meditation, giving up attachment to the body.

Mahadeva, Siva—The Destroyer-god of the Hindu pantheon

Mahavira—Twenty-fourth *tirthankara* of the Jainas, a senior contemporary of Gautam Buddha.

Muni Subrata—Twentieth *tirthankara* of the Jainas

Nandanavana—A forest well-known for its beauty, said to be located between Mount Meru and Devakuru.

Parsva—Twenty-third *tirthankara* of the Jainas.

Parvati—Consort of Siva of the Hindu pantheon, Mother-Goddess

Saivism—A branch of Hinduism which worships Siva as the principal deity.

Pausadha—A religions practice in which the lay follower spends a night like a monk. He keeps away from his wife and normal family life.

Samayika—Concentration on religious themes for a duration of 48 minites.

Sasan Devi—Protecting deity of the *tirthankaras*.

Sramana—As distinguished from the Brahmana, the Sramana cult in India sheltered innunerable creeds, including Jainism and Buddhism, often called heretical which did not believe in the authority of the *Vedas*.

Sravaka, *sravika*—Lay followers, male and female, in the Jaina order.

Sulsa—A great *sravika* at the time of Lord Mahavira.

Tirthankara—Founder of the Jaina order from time to time.

Utsarpini—Up-phase of the Jaina time-cycle.

Vidyadhara—A species of human beings who are in possession of some special arts like flying.

Vishnu—The Protector-good of the Hindu pantheon.

Yaksa—A species of celestial beings residing in the upper-most strata of the Ratnaprabha hell, just bordering the earth.

Yogi, *Yogini*—*Yoga* is the Hindu system of philosophic meditation and asceticism designed to bring about the reunion of the devotee's soul with the Superior Reality. A devotee, male or female, of *yogo*. (In original Jaina terminology, *yoga* implied activities of the body, mind and speech which create fetters, and was therefore to be discarded. In later period, however, many Jaina monks have practised *yoga* in the Hindu sense,

64 *Yoginis*—Attendants of the Mother-Goddess in the Hindu pantheon.

VOLUME II

ARAMASOBHA

There lived at Palasagrama a brahmin named Agnisharma. He was an expert in sacrificial rites and was thoroughly versed in the four Vedas. His wife's name was Jvalanashikha. He had a daughter named Vidyutprabha who was extremely graceful. When Vidyutprabha was eight years old, her mother passed away. This was a great shock for her. Besides, the responsibility of managing the household was now on her young and immature shoulders. She would get up before sun rise, clean the house and besmear the kitchen; then she would follow the cattle to the jungle for their grazing At mid day she would be back home, milk the cows, serve food to h r father and take food herself, and follow the cattle to the jungle again. She came back after sun-set. After she had finished her daily duties, she would be wholly exhausted. But she would not go to bed before her father, and she would get up before him. Such was her daily routine.

One day Vidyutprabha came to her father and said :

"Father, I am somewhat incapable of running the household alone. What to speak of me, even the bulls will break down under pressure of so much work. So my request is that you marry some respectable lady so that my burden will be shared and the household will run well."

This was a good proposal and Agnisharma agreed. He soon married and brought a new wife. Even Vidyutprabha was happy to receive a new mother But the happiness was not to last for long. The new mother had no training in household work; besides, she was too much lazy and easy-going. So all her expectations were washed away and Vidyutprabha had only remorse in store for her; but she would blame none save her own luck. With a deep sigh, she would say, "So long I worked for my father, but now

I have the added burden of a mother I sought happiness but I have lost even what I had "

In this manner, four years rolled by, and those were long and unhappy years for the young girl She was now a lass of twelve One day while looking after the cattle in the jungle, she lay under a tree and fell fast asleep At that time, a big and dark snake, who had a rapid pace and bloodshot eyes, slowly approached and addressed her in a human voice ·

"Charming maid ! Fear me not. Do as I suggest. I have been living in this forest for a long time and good luck prevailing, I was happy here But to-day my ill-luck has come up and there are some charmers in this forest who are in search of me If they capture me, they will place me in a basket and make my life miserable So I seek shelter with thee. Place me on thy lap and cover me with thy cloth To shelter one in distress is an act of righteousness."

Vidyutprabha woke up at the approach of the snake. She distinctly heard all this and hurriedly thought

"I did not acquire much virtue in my previous life and hence my present misery If now I do not help this snake in distress, then the door to happiness will never open for me "

So thinking, she extended her hand to pick up the snake, placed it on her lap and covered it with her cloth No sooner had she finished all this than the charmers arrived on the scene and made enquiries about the snake. Vidyutprabha told them that she was sleeping and so she had no knowledge of it.

The charmers were convinced. "After all, this is a young girl," said they among themselves, "She would have been frightened to see the terrible snake. So it can't be here." When they were gone beyond sight, Vidyutprabha told the snake to come out and go its own way. But as she removed her cloth, there was no snake to be seen. She knew not if she was in a dream or confusion, but before she could think further, she heard a voice saying ; "I am

' Charming maid ! I seek shelter with thee......"

overwhelmed by thy courage, oh charming maid! Seek a boon."

Vidyutprabha turned round and saw a god who was repeating the aforesaid words. So said Vidyutprabha, "Oh the best among the gods! If you are pleased with me, then be good enough to do something to help my cattle. Please give a forest cover to them. They are much oppressed by the rays of the sun."

The god cast a deep sigh. Thought he, "What a request! She could have got rid of her poverty. Ignorant is she. Whatever that may be, her wishes must be duly honoured." So he created a forest above her, as charming as the Nandana-vana, the celebrated heavenly forest. Then he said to her:

"Here is your forest, wherein you will get trees yielding all sorts of fruits and flowers. Wherever you go, this will follow you like an umbrella. Like a divine damsel you will freely play in it and your cattle will suffer no more. If at any time in future you are in difficulty, think of me and I shall be at your service."

The god disappeared. Vidyutprabha ate sweet fruits from that forest and returned home in the evening. The mother asked her to take food but she had no appetite. Now on, she would go to the forest early in the morning and return home in the evening. There she would be playing throughout the day while her cattle would be grazing.

One day as she was lying under a thick tree, king Jitashatru of Pataliputra with his retinue was passing by that way. He was delighted to see the divine forest and decided to rest there for some time. The king's throne was placed under a tree, the pack animals were let loose to eat grass, the chariots were parked in a shady spot; and the men were at ease, gossiping and relaxing. This disturbed the peace of the forest and Vidyutprabha's cattle fled away. When Vidyutprabha woke up, she found that the cattle had disappeared. So she rushed forth to find them out. Now, as she moved, the forest-umbrella over her head moved too, and the king and

this retinue were also moving, all topsy-turvy. This was a great surprise for the king. He was anxious to discover its secret and came to know that the forest was moving with the girl. So he asked his minister to approach the girl and request her to go back to her original position, assuring her that his men would find her cows The minister did as per the king's command. As soon as the girl returned, the forest stopped still. The king's men and animals were restored to order and the king was happy. Then the minister said :

"Your Majesty ! The surprise we experienced seems to be all due to this girl "

The king replied, "Truly so Is she a nymph, or a girl from the nether world, or even a damsel from heaven ? She would be a precious acquisition for the palace of any king "

The minister agreed At the king's wishes, he came again to the girl, told her all about the king, and finding her favourably disposed, at right moment, proposed for her hand for his master.

Vidyutprabha was abashed and said :

"High-born damsels do not select their husband. He is selected for her by the parents. You may like to converse with my father. His name is Agnisharma and he lives in the village nearby."

The minister went to her father and narrated the whole thing. This became a moment of great joy for Agnisharma too. He was brought to the presence of the king in the forest Now, delay was unbearable to the king and so the marriage was celebrated then and there as per *gandharva* rites. The king wanted to change the name of his new consort, and as she had a forest umbrella-cover on her head, she was henceforth to be called Aramashobha (meaning comfort and grace). To put the brahmin in affluence, the king bestowed on him revenue from twelve villages.

Then the king mounted on the elephant in the company of his wife ready to depart. The forest was still on her head. The minister went ahead of the party to organise the reception of the royal couple at the capital. It was a great

occasion. People everywhere, singly or in groups, were talking of the good-luck of the monarch. These words, as they reached the king's ears, made him happy too. The royal couple were now at the palace where all comforts were provided for the new queen. The king and the queen lived henceforth a happy life.

Now, brahmin Agnisharma had a daughter from his newly married wife. When she came of age, her mother thought that if somehow Aramasobha could be made to die, then the king might be pleased to consider her own daughter to be worthy of him "And to kill the daughter of a co-wife is no sin", she said to herself. So she hatched a plot and one day said to her husband :

"Aramasobha has gone to her husband's home for many years now but we have never sent her anything For girls things from their parental homes are particularly dear."

The brahmin smiled and said, "Aramasobha is no longer poor. She is now a queen and hardly needs anything from us."

Agnishikha (for such was the name of the brahmin's second wife) protested : "Even though the father-in-law's home has affluence all round, anything sent by parents is dear to a girl Though rich, daughters expect occasional gifts from their former home" The argument had no gap. So the brahmin could not turn it down The lady prepared *kesariya-moduka* (henceforth to be called *modaka* a delicious sweetmeat), poisoned it, placed it inside a pot and sealed it. Then she entrusted it to her husband saying :

"You give it to Aramasobha and none else. Even Aramasobha is not to share the sweets with anyone. If she shares it with others, we shall be put to ridicule, poor as the stuff is, and poor as we are"

Agnisharma could not read into the evil design of his wife. He picked up the pot and turned his steps towards Pataliputra When he was not far from the capital city, he was so tired that he placed the pot beneath a banyan tree on the wayside, lay down to rest and was soon fast asleep.

A *Yaksha* used to live on that tree. By dint of his great insight, he came to know of the evil design of the brahmin lady. Thought he : "When there is such an able one like me here, can anybody put Aramasobha to the torture of death ? Has she not accumulated much righteousness in her previous birth ?" So thinking he replaced the poisoned *modaka* by a good one, delicious like nectar. The brahmin got up, picked up the pot and resumed his journey. At last, he was at the palace gate. His arrival was duly announced and with the royal sanction, the brahmin was conducted inside the court to the presence of His Majesty. The brahmin profusely blessed the king. Then there were mutual enquiries about health, after which the brahmin presented the pot to the king. The king was very happy and ordered it immediately to be carried to the queen's chamber The brahmin was honoured by the gifts of clothes and ornaments

Now the king was in Aramasobha's chamber. He thought of the *modaka* and wanted to have a portion of it. Happily did the queen open the pot and, what joy, the whole chamber was filled with its fragrance "Surely", said His Majesty, "is this *modaka* prepared with nectar" The king cast a lustful glance at the queen and requested her to distribute it to all her co-wives, In deference to the king's wishes, Aramasobha did it with her own hands. All the queens were happy to taste it and all spoke in glowing terms of the skill of her mother

When the king came back to the court, the brahmin made a prayer for his daughter's going to his home for once To this, the king smiled and said, "The queen does not see even the sun ; so how can she go to her parents' home ?" The brahmin returned on fulfilment of his mission and reported it to his wife. The lady was now waiting to hear about her step-daughter's death But the tiding did not come and she grew restless. Perhaps the sweet was not sufficiently poisoned. So she resolved to make a renewed attempt and continue it till her goal was attained. This time she poisoned the *modaka* very deeply, packed it as before and despatched it with her husband with the same

sort of message. The brahmin was again on the road to Pataliputra When he arrived beneath the same banyan tree, he was tired, lay down and fell fast asleep. As before, the *modaka* was changed by the *Yaksha*, was later taken to the court and delivered to the king This time, too, the *modaka* was tasted by all the queens and both Aramasobha and her mother were praised by all.

But the coveted bad news about Aramasobha's death did not arrive and the brahmin-lady was bitter and highly depressed. So she repeated the mischief for the third time, mixing this time the most dreadful *talaputa* poison with it She also insisted that Aramasobha should be brought once to her parental home, and if the king did not agree, she advised her husband to use his brahminical power to force his hands. The brahmin started again, came under the same banyan tree, where everything repeated as before, so that the *modaka* was changed, and once again, at the palace, everyone was happy to taste the divine stuff and spoke in high praise of its sender.

The court was now in full session. Agnisharma made the proposal about his daughter's going to her parental home, and insisted that her first child should, in fairness to the custom prevailing, be delivered there. But the king would not budge, "That has never been so," said he, "and that will never be" The brahmin now displayed his brahminical power and threatened to commit suicide right there if his request was not honoured. Said he, "If you do not send Aramasobha with me, then I shall stain you with the sin of murdering a brahmin Oh king, I gave you my daughter's hand not on this term that she would never see her parents at their own home She too must be feeling keen to go there once. Will the parental affection thus go unheeded ?"

The minister intervened, "Your Majesty ! Surely this brahmin has gone mad. But if you do not agree, he will not hesitate to stain you with the blasphemy of killing him. So may it be decided that the queen goes once "

Under so much pressure, the king reluctantly agreed.

The queen was given much treasure and was seen off. Along with her started her forest-umbrella. Agnishikha had her plot wholly ready. She had a deep well dug behind her house. At the right moment, Aramasobha gave birth to a godly child. She was then taken to the backyard of the house for a wash, her step-mother attending. On seeing the well she asked when it was dug The mother said "This has been dug for you You are now a queen and there may be jealous people who may poison your drinking water if it is fetched from a distance. Hence this arrangement for your safety" Aramasobha took it all as said and bent to have a look inside. As she did so, the step-mother pushed her into it. As she was going down, her mind went back to the god who had once promised her help, and he readily appeared on the scene. He supported her by his hand and made her sit on a comfortable place. He would have punished Agnishikha on the spot for her misdeed but desisted as Aramasobha held fast his feet. In the nether world, the god built a chamber for her stay. The forest-umbrella too stayed with her there

Agnishikha now dressed her daughter in the clothes of a woman recently delivered and placed her on the couch. When the servant maids returned, they expressed surprise to see a lustreless and uncouth woman with a plump frame lying there. False Aramasobha said, "I know not why all this has happened, but meseems, some internal disease or disorder is the cause of my physical change" When the servant maids reported the matter to Agnishikha, she rushed wailing and striking her breast : "Oh daughter ! How it has happened like that ? Has anybody cast inauspicious glance at thee ? Or is it due to gastrities or some organic trouble ? Alas ! All my sweet dreams may come to an end." She pretended to make all possible arrangements for her restoration but none yielded any result.

Now, the minister came to take the queen back. The party started for Pataliputra. On the way, when the servant maids asked why the forest-umbrella was not there, false Aramasobha said that it had gone to the well to take water and would soon follow. When the party was in the vicinity

of Pataliputra, the king arranged a fitting welcome. He was pleased to see a godly son but was sorry at the queen's plight When he enquired the cause of it, she repeated the same words as before—"some internal disease or disorder." The king's sorrow knew no end. When he enquired about the forest, the lady said, "When I came, it was taking water at the well. So I have left it behind. It will come itself after some time." The king had some doubt about the lady. Was it Aramasobha or someone else had stepped in her place? He apprehended that there might be a trick behind it, some sort of mischief. He said to her again : "My dear ! Bring that forest back I feel so uneasy without it"

And there was the same evasive reply, "Be not anxious, sir ! It will come back in time"

The king's doubt was now largely confirmed. This was another lady and there had been some mischief-mongering at his cost. The plot must be unfolded.

At the other end, Aramasobha was safe and comfortable at her underground shelter and all her needs were taken care of by the god. One day she said to him. "I feel very uneasy for my son It behoves you, oh god, to do something to relieve me of this."

"This can be done by dint of my power, but only on one condition At night you may go to your son, but you must return before sun-rise If you fail, then you forfeit my assistance for ever And in that case, a dead snake will drop from your braid and that will sever our link beyond repair If you agree, then your desire to meet your son may be fulfilled"

Aramasobha agreed With the god's power assisting her, she reached the palace, embraced the child in her arms and was happy to play with him When the time for her return approached, she placed the child on the couch, scattered some fruits and flowers from her forest and left. When in the morning the matter was reported to the king, he made enquiries about it from the queen who said, "My Lord ! I brought these fruits and flowers from my forest and scattered them here"

"If that be so, then bring some fruits and flowers from the forest just now."

"Well, sir, I shall do so to-night."

The king had no more doubt about the mischief played on him. The event was repeated on the second night, and then on the third, this time the king himself keeping watch. With a sword in his hand, he sat in the shadow of a lamp At the right hour, Aramasobha came, embraced the child and started playing with him The king had no doubt as to who she was but he restrained himself. Aramasobha left the palace before sun-rise

In the morning, he went to false Aramasobha and said, "Lady ! If you can restore the forest, well and good. Otherwise, I have no need of thee Go thy way."

The earth now slipped away from beneath the lady's feet She knew not what to do. The king rebuked her harshly and returned to the court

On the fourth night, Aramasobha came as usual to her son The king was in hiding Now, before sun-rise, as she was about to return, he held her hand and said, 'My dear, why this trick with me ? Come back to thy palace. I can no longer brook thy absence."

Aramasobha was taken aback She tried to free herself but failed. In a helpless tone she said, "Sir, there is some serious reason behind it To-night you delay me not. I shall come again to morrow at the same hour and narrate the whole thing to you If you release me not now, I shall have cause to repent throughout my life."

The king said, "My dear ! My eyes are languishing for you for many days Now that you are within my grip, how can I let you go ? Tomorrow is far off ; even a moment would be too long." Aramasobha was between a frying pan and fire. To narrate the whole thing to the king would take a lot of time and the sun-rise was not far ; if she did not do so, the king would not release her. She could not disoblige the king, whatever the risk She tried to be brief but all in vain. Mean-

while the early rays of the sun burst forth on the earth and the dead snake dropped from her braid, as predicted. "How unfortunate am I! Alas, I am undone!" These words dropped from her lips as she herself dropped senseless on the ground. When restored to her senses, she was only moaning and bewailing. The king consoled her saying. "My dear! Who can avoid the inevitable? Whatever was destined has happened Forget the past and look forward to a golden future."

The king was now all rage towards false Aramasobha. She was handed over to the guards and was severely beaten. Aramasobha pleaded mercy for her sister and the king could not deny it to her But she was expelled from the city and her father was deprived of the twelve villages and the treasures bestowed on him The family was turned out from the kingdom for good

Aramasobha was happy once again One day the king and the queen were in conversation, when the latter thought, "My early life has been spent in distress followed by happiness now. These are all the outcome of *karma*, good as well as bad, acquired in previous life. I must know them." In those days, Acharya Virabhadra with his spiritual family of five hundred monks was present there and the royal couple thought of benefitting from the presence of the celebrated Acharya After the queen had listened the Acharya, she fell down in a swoon When she recovered, she made the following submission: "Your Holiness! The account of my previous life as given by you is wholly correct. With my reawakened memory, I can fully testify it But I am now uneasy about the worldly existence. With the permission of my husband, the king, I desire to be initiated by you into the holy order."

Needless to add, the king approved of her noble wishes. He, too, revealed his mind in the following words:

My dear! Once having known the worthlessness of the worldly life, who wants to remain any longer in it? I too shall follow thee"

Then turning to the Acharya, he said,

"Your Holiness ! I shall presently return to the palace and crown Aramesobha's son Malayasundara as king. Immediately thereafter I shall return to thee. Till I come back, may your Holy Grace not withdraw from this city !"

The king came back to the palace and placed the young prince on the throne. Then both the king and the queen were initiated into the holy order. They spent their time in acquiring scriptural knowledge and soon became profound. The king, now a monk, was nominated by the Acharya as his successor to the holy chair and under his able guidance, the order flourished. Aramasobha became the head of the order of nuns. For many years, they served the order and then gave up their mortal frames through spiritual fasts and attained coveted higher regions.

ARAMASOBHA'S PREVIOUS BIRTH

At Champapuri, there lived a very rich merchant named Kuladhara Kulananda was the name of his wife. The merchant had seven daughters named as follows: Kamalashri, Kamalavati, Kamala, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Jayamati and Priyakarini They were as beautiful as they were proficient. They were all married to merchants of very noble birth An eighth daughter was born to Kuladhara but she was less fortunate The parents were so unhappy at her birth that they did not perform even her naming ceremony The girl grew up and stepped from childhood into youth But her father was indifferent to her future happiness and did not bother to settle her in life If some member of his household drew his attention to this, he would only say that she would be settled as soon as a right groom was available, and he would assure them that he was on the look out for one

One day, as the merchant was seated at his shop, a stranger youth came up to him His dress was poor and his hairs were dishevelled and infested with lice

The merchant "Who are you? Wherefrom do you come? What country you belong to ?

The youth : "Sir, I belong to Koshalapura. Nandi is the name of my father and Soma that of my mother My own name is Nandana I am pennyless I went to Chandadesha to do some business but my ill luck followed me even there At Chandadesha lives a merchant named Vasantadeva who belongs to this city I am employed in his service He has sent me with a letter which is to be delivered at his house but I know not its location. It will be a great favour done to me if you could direct me thither."

Kuladhara thought within himself that this would be a right groom for his youngest daughter. "If I settle

my daughter's marriage with this young man, then I get rid of her," thought he, and said,

"Young man, you deliver the letter at Vasantadeva's house and come back at once"

The merchant sent one of his attendants to accompany him The young man also did as he was asked to do After he had finished his bath, the merchant gave him clothes and food and then at the right moment, he placed the proposal for his daughter's marriage.

The youth : "I have to return this very day, sir."

The merchant : "There will be no difficulty. I shall make every arrangement in a fitting manner and the ceremony itself will not take much time For your subsistence, I shall later bestow wealth on you."

The young man agreed and the marriage ceremony was over within a few hours The daughter bade good-bye to her parents' home The couple then set out on the road to Chandadesha When they were very near to Avantidesha, they took shelter in a temple to pass the night there It was the dead of night and the bride was fast asleep So thought the young man lying beside her :

"As my wife is with me, I cannot walk as fast as I would like to And if I go like this, it will be necessary to spend a long time on the way. I have scanty means to support both of us in the journey, and if it is exhausted, I would be forced to begging That will be highly unbecoming of me. So why not I give up my bride here. This will save me from a probable calamity."

No sooner had he thought it than he gave effect to it. He picked up whatever things he could and immediately left the place.

At sun-rise, when the lady got up, she found neither her husband nor the means to support herself She took no time to realise that she had been given up She could hardly think of such a thing happening but was soon reconciled to the hard reality and set her mind on the future. For a

moment she thought of going back to her parents ; but then she thought of the sort of life she had led there and the sort of reception she would receive now, and preferred to court suffering to going back to a life of scorn. But the very next moment she thought as to who would support her and how she would begin this new life. The prospect of begging was not at all palatable But she gathered courage and confidence, and thought : "If all living beings support themselves, I too can do the same. I will take up some work to support myself but I must preserve my purity and truth."

The brave lose nothing ; instead, they find a way. The lady got up and reached the market-place of the city of Vishala. She stood in front of the shop of merchant Manibhadra She looked at him, as he looked at her. She had a feeling that this was a good man. So she came nearer and said,

"Father, I am on the look-out for some work. It will be a great favour if you could give me one.'

Manibhadra felt compassion for her but he hesitated to take an unknown lady into his household He asked who she was and why she was there The lady said,

"Sir, I am the daughter of merchant Kuladhara of Champa. I was on my way to Chandadesha in the company of my husband, but misfortune having befallen, I have been separated from him So I have come to you to seek some job so that my days of suffering may be easily spent"

Manibhadra consoled her and showed her affection. He invited her to stay in his household and she was placed in charge of his household affairs. He sent men in search of her husband but no trace of him could be found. He also made confidential enquiries about her parents and they tallied with what she had told him So she was installed in Manibhadra's family with full dignity, and, on her part, she won the affection of everybody by dint of her good behaviour.

Now, Manibhadra built a magnificent Jina temple with high gates and colourful flags. Kuladhara's daughter

went there everyday to offer prayer and worship. She came into contact with the nuns and acquired the knowledge of *nava tattva* (nine doctrines). Now she became a *sravika* like the great Sulasa, steadfast in equanimity. Manibhadra was never niggardly to fulfil her wishes and held her in great esteem. Once she desired to donate three gold umbrellas bedecked with jewels to be placed to cover the head of the Jina image and this was readily arranged. Much of her time was now devoted to penance, service to the holy order and sundry religious activities.

One day Manibhadra sat deeply immersed in anxiety when Kuladhara's daughter came to him and enquired about the cause. In apprising her of the situation, the merchant said :

"For the worship of the god, the king entrusted me with the upkeep of a flower garden and everyday flowers collected from there were used for worship. But today the garden is suddenly dry. I tried my best to restore it to freshness but all my efforts have been in vain. I know not what hard steps the king would now take against me for this "

"Father," said she, "suffer not with anxiety. Leave the matter to me. I shall set it right. I command rock-like purity and till the garden is restored to freshness, do I give up my four foods."

"Don't ye say so, my daughter. Put me not to ridicule by taking my anxiety wholly on thyself."

"Father, you know, a vow taken once cannot be dishonoured. You will just see that all the adverse forces will give way to the strength of my spirit."

Kuladhara's daughter returned to the Jina temple. Bowing before the image, she immersed herself deep in *kayotsarga*. She touched neither food nor drink. A day passed, followed by a second and then by a third. At last, *Sasanadevi*, the controlling goddess of the order, made her appearance on the third night and said :

"My daughter, a god with a wrong outlook has played havoc with the garden. But he could not withstand thy purity

and has fled. Your vow is fulfilled and in the morning you will find the garden restored to its freshness."

The morning saw the miracle happen. The garden was restored to its beauty and freshness. Manibhadra was astonished. He rushed to Kuladhara's daughter at the temple premises to break the news and congratulate her. Said he,

"My daughter, my wishes have been fulfilled by the strength of thy purity and penance. It behoves thee to break the fast now." With the speed of lightning the news reached every household in the town, and all the resident of the town, both men and women, came rushing to the temple. All spoke highly of her purity and the merchant's good luck who has such a worthy daughter in his house. Kuladhara's daughter offered food to the monks, served the same to the members of her order and then broke her fast.

This was indeed a great day for the religion of the Jina. Many days passed thereafter. One night, at late hours, as Kuladhara's daughter lay awake in her bed, a thought came to her :

"By good fortune, I am born in the order of the Jina. But I cannot practice the 'great vows.' This will be a severe failure on my part. So I must make the best use of whatever limited capacity I have for spiritual advance."

Now, she changed the course of her life. Sometimes she would be on fast for two days, sometimes for three days and sometimes for four, raising the duration gradually to a fortnight and then a month. This reduced her body. Then she undertook the final fast and ended her life through auspicious meditation. Thereafter she was born in heaven called Saudharmaloka. Having completed her life there, she has been born in the house of brahmin Agnisharma as his daughter and has been named Vidyutprabha.

HARIBALA

Vasantasena was the king of Kanchanpura. His first consort was Vasantasena. After a long gap following their marriage, a daughter was born to them. She was named Vasantashri. She was a notable mixture of beauty and intelligence. When she attained her youth, the royal couple became anxious to settle her in marriage.

In the same city, there lived a fisherman named Haribala. He was very simple, polite and industrious and was happy in his poverty. His wife Prachanda (meaning 'violent') fully justified her name, and she was very ugly, harsh in voice and impolite in her behaviour. Haribala was always afraid of her turbulence and never enjoyed her company.

One day, Haribala had gone to the bank of the river to catch fish. A *muni* (monk) was just then passing by that way. As if induced from within, Haribala bowed before him. The *muni* blessed him, but, finding him enggaed in an impious profession, he said,

"Friend, do you also practise pious deeds ?"

"I view on my family profession as a pious deed, and, believe me, sir, honestly do I fulfil it. Everyday I come to this river bank and spread my net. I view as my own whatever catch I have I know not of any other pious deed."

The *muni*, who had a natural serenity on his face, charm in his voice and equanimity in his eyes, said.

"Oh fisherman, family profession is not the only pious deed one should perform. These professions vary with individuals. *Dharma* is based on *ahimsa*. Anything that strengthens *ahimsa* is *dharma*, and everything else is a sin. Every living being wants to live. Life is dear to all. So, torture not anyone, give not pain to anyone. What you

call your family profession is at every stage a sinful act. You need take a look at yourself."

Haribala felt a stir within himself. His thought got encouragement. The seed of piety hidden in him came up. As if spontaneously, the following words mixed with awe came out from his mouth :

"Oh great *muni*, save me. I am deeply immersed in acts of killing It is not possible that I get out of them. You show me the way."

The *muni* looked at Haribala. Pity was taking shape on his face The *muni* wanted him to desist wholly from acts of killing but this was too much to expect. So he found a way out for him, and said,

"Fisherman, I suggest that you spare your first catch, kill it not. This may be easy for you. Isn't it so ?"

Haribala thought for a moment and then, mastering courage, he said,

"Oh *muni*, I accept this. From this day on, I shall not kill my first catch."

The *muni* went on his way and Haribala turned to his work. The power of spiritualism, when it is awaken, knows no limit and is capable of washing away all the sins. Haribala threw his net in the river. As he pulled it, he felt it to be heavy. The catch was a big fish. But he remembered the vow ; so he tied a shell round its neck and restored it to the stream. He cast his net for the second time, but as ill-luck would have it, the catch was the same fish and this happened several times, and on each occasion he restored it to the stream. It was already noon and the fisherman had no catch for himself. So he changed the place But the fish too did the same and even there he caught the same fish in his net. He changed the place several times, but with no better result, as if at every point in the stream, there was no other aquatic. The sun was now on the western sky but the fisherman had not earned his day's subsistence. But he remained steadfast in his vow and did not repent for it.

Even a small vow sometimes becomes pretty difficult but the difficulty is resolved by steadfastness. Seeing that Haribala would not deviate, the fish said in a human voice,

"Oh pious man, I heartily congratulate you for your steadfastness. You did not care for your daily bread in fulfilling your vow. This has impressed me much. Ask for a boon."

Haribala was surprised. "You are only a fish," said he. "What boon can you give me ? Between man and fish, you should know, one does not help the other."

"Oh lucky man, why do you see only a fish in me ? I am the Master of the Salt Ocean. I came here to test your steadfastness and I am happy to declare that you have successfully got through. Most people do not take any vow. Few take but do not fulfil. There are very few like you who are truly steadfast. So I urge on you again to ask for a boon I will deem it a great privilege to be able to help you."

Haribala was very happy to notice the instantaneous effect of a vow. Thinking for a while, he said.

"Oh great one ! I am grateful to thee for thy kindness. I pray that whenever I am in difficulty, thou extend thy help to me."

It was already evening but the fisherman had no money in his hand and he was hesitant to return home. So he went to a temple and lay there in a corner engrossing himself in his own thought :

'I have fulfilled only a fraction of a vow and what a good return it has given me. Fortunate must be those who practise *ahimsa* to the full.'

It was a striking coincidence that on the same night fisherman Haribala took shelter in the temple, a young merchant with the same name was scheduled to meet Princess Vasantashri at the same place. This was desired by the princess herself who, while seated one day at her window, had seen the young merchant Haribala passing by that way

and fell deeply in love with him. She at once scribbled a brief note suggesting the meeting and dropped it from her window. The note from the princess suggested the meeting at the temple on the fourteenth night of the dark half of the month wherefrom, it was suggested, the two would proceed to some unknown destination.

On the plea of visiting the temple for purposes of worship, Vasantashri started from the palace on the appointed night. She was in the best of her clothes and jewellery and carried many other essential things. But merchant Haribala did not turn up on account of a mental conflict. He had never known the princess before and her love was only at first sight. This, he apprehended, might later be a cause of trouble. Besides, women are by nature crafty and secretly they perform many things. When Vasantashri reached the temple, it was very dark. She called out :

"Haribala, Haribala."

There was no response except the echo. The princess called out again Fisherman Haribala heard it, and finding somebody calling him by his name, he responded from where he lay. The princess said,

"Hurry up, my dear We have to go a long distance." Fisherman Haribala did not take much time to understand the situation. He understood that he had replaced somebody bearing the same name as himself, who had failed to turn up. So he thought of playing the necessary role. He at once came up and mounted on the chariot. The chariot proceeded at top speed. In his hurry, Haribala had left his fishing net behind. After they had gone some distance, the princess discovered that the man accompanying her had hardly much clothes on. Did he come in disguise or some miscreant had robbed him of his wear, she thought When the princess asked him about his clothes, he said.

"Hm"

So she gave him some out of her own stock. Then the princess induced him to enter into conversation with her and conveyed her deep love to him but he would only repeat as previously,

The chariot proceeded at top speed.

"Hm."

Now, the princess felt some doubt about the man in whose company she had eloped and many a question disturbed her mind.

'Is he proud? Does he not understand what I say? Is he angry? Why does he not talk with me and convey his love to me?'

She was now sure that she had come out with a different man, that she had taken a wrong step or she had been deceived. She was pretty sure that this was not the man whom she loved, When it was dawn, she could clearly see the man seated beside her. Her dreams now vanished and the ground almost slipped from beneath her feet She had only scorn and remorse for what she had done. Her mind went back to the palace, to her parents, the king and the queen, their great affection for her, her own comfortable life—all these were left behind and that for good, and she had stepped into a great uncertainty. The princess could no longer bear and fell down in a swoon. When she regained consciousness, she bewailed and lamented, to become senseless again.

Haribala knew not what to do. He read into her mental agony. He realised that he could not live with her in peace and comfort. He thought of the *deva*—if he could do something to save the situation.

Time is the best healer. With the passage of time, the princess became somewhat consoled. She could blame none save herself. All that had happened was her own doing. It was no use lamenting for what had been left behind; wiser it would be to look ahead and build up the future.

If an arrow, haphazardly cast, hits the target, it becomes a source of joy for the archer Such a thing now happened to the princess She opened her tired eyes to look at the man and wanted to ask him about his family, profession, residence and many other things. Just at that moment she heard a voice from the sky:

'Princess, you are lucky. It would be a folly on your

part to look down on this man. His luck is to take a favourable turn very soon. Who can be a better consort for thee save he ?'

Now a feeling of joy replaced her remorse and she began to feel love for the man. She looked at him again and tried to read into his mind. But Haribala sat calm, grave, placid. With hesitation, the princess said.

"I am thirsty. If you fetch me some water......... ." Haribala got up at once and proceeded towards the jungle. After a short time, he came back with a jar full of water. The princess drank to her heart's content. Then she looked at him again: She was convinced that a man who could bring water within such a short time in such a lonely place could not be just ordinary.

The sun was now high up in the sky and Vasantashri could fully see the man. What wander, the ugly man was totally changed and he was now all beauty and youth. Vasantashri was immensely delighted. She said to him.

"My dear, it is time you accept my hand. The desire that goaded me hither in thy company may now reach its fruition."

The two were married there as per the *gandharva* rites.

It was the beginning of a new chapter in the life of Haribala and Vasantashri. They resumed their journey and reached the city of Visala As they entered the city, they met with a merchant from whom they came to know all about the city. They decided to settle there. They purchased a seven-storeyed mansion for their residence, took four horses and many attendants to make their life comfortable. Theirs was a very happy life.

All along a man of active habits, Haribala maintained them even now. Everyday, he would receive the needy at his house, listen to their difficulties and extend whatever help he could, including financial. Though a new-comer, he soon became well-known on account of his generosities, a very respected citizen of the city of Visala. Stories of his

charities soon reached the ears of King Madanabega who invited him to his court and honoured him. He was admitted to a high rank by the king and soon became his friend and favourite.

To strengthen the tie of friendship, the king one day invited Haribala and his wife to dinner. As the couple came to the palace, they were duly received by the king who served them food at the table with his own hands. But Vasantashri's beauty captivated the king's eyes, who lustily longed for her company. From that day on, the only thought that haunted the king was—how to get her. He conceived many stratagems but none helped him to realise his end. At last, he took his chief minister into confidence For the chief minister, this was a good chance, since he was very jealous of Haribala's popularity. Within the next three or four days, he submitted his plan which the king liked and accepted.

When the court assembled the next day, and all the courtiers were present, the following announcement was made by the king : "You all know, gentlemen, the princess is now grown up and I have to arrange for her marriage in the very near future. This will be a nice opportunity to establish contact and friendship with leading kings in countries far and near. Now, it will be the responsibility of our courtiers to go and extend invitations personally. I have in my mind to invite the great king Vibhisana of Lanka with the members of his royal household to grace the occasion by their august presence. Someone from among you is, therefore, to go thither as my envoy. May I know from you who may be entrusted with this very important and responsible mission ?"

There was silence all over the court. Courtiers were looking at one another but none was ready to shoulder the mission. Then the chief minister stood up and said :

"Your Majesty ! You are a favourite of fortune. You have in your court assembled people of all sorts of calibres. Going to Lanka to invite King Vibhisana is indeed a difficult job, but we may have someone to fulfil even this difficult mission."

Then the minister looked all around and suggested Haribala's name. He spoke about him in very glowing terms.

The king now turned to Haribala, who felt elated. So, even though he was not keen, the mission fell on him. The king was delighted at the success of the plan. Haribala returned home and narrated the events at the court to his wife. Vasantashri at once saw in it a trap. She said,

"My dear, you have been deceived. There must be a plot behind all this. The king has some evil design. Ever since we went to dinner at the palace, he must have been hatching it. He wants to remove you for ever so that he can have me. It will be better if you somehow come out of it."

Haribala's sense of pride was hurt. "I may die but I cannot decline an assignment I have accepted," said he. "So I must go. The outcome is in the hands of destiny, but to make the best of exertions is within my capacity." Then casting a deep sigh, he added, "I am not as much worried about myself as for you. I do not know what may happen to you after I leave."

Vasantashri on her part was not prepared to show any weakness. She said,

"My dear ! May you safely return after the fulfilment of your mission. May there be no difficulty in the way. You do not feel anxious on my score. I am fully capable to guard my purity. All the designs of the king will be baffled." Haribala started on an auspicious day. He passed through many villages, towns and countries ; he left behind many villages, towns and countries ; he crossed through many rivers, forests and mountains. At last, he reached the sea shore. He had to cross it to reach his destination, but there was no ferry nor did he know how to swim. He was now convinced that it was a plot to kill him. In this difficult situation, he remembered the *deva* who appeared at once, and on hearing about the difficulty, he turned himself into a fish to carry Haribala through the sea. Comfortably seated on the back of the fish, Haribala now enjoyed the first experience of a voyage. Swimming through the limitless waters, the fish at last reached the shores of Lanka. Haribala's

joy know no end. He had never thought that such a difficult job would be so easily accomplished. He thanked the *deva* for his services and bade him good-bye.

From the shore, Haribala moved into the city. It was a different world altogether which presented itself to him. Lanka was a magnificent city with wonderful buildings and parks, the like of which Haribala had never seen before. There, inside the city, he came across a wonderful mansion, which, however, wore a deserted look. He entered the mansion and freely moved through its chambers, At the sixth floor, in one of the chambers, he saw a young lady lying senseless. This surprised him all the more. He looked around and in one corner, he saw a jar full of nectar He sprinkled a few drops from it on the lady, and what a surprise, the lady sat up, as if awaken from a sleep. She was, however, somewhat surprised and abashed at the presence of a stranger and foreigner in her chamber She asked him who he was and how he came there. After Haribala had narrated his part of the account, the lady gave the following account about herself.

"My name is Kusumashri My father Puspabatuka is a gardener unto King Vibhisana. The king has much wealth and grains but his ideas are not lofty. My whole family is unfavourably disposed towards him The quarrel has gone so far now that none save me from my family can go to the king As for myself, I do not want to go to him, but I cann't help. It is my father who has made me the pivot of the whole game."

Haribala's curiosity was fired. Kusumashri continued :

"Once my father had consulted an astrologer about my future The fellow had predicted a bright future for me and said that my husband would be a king My difficulties really started from that day. My father has been dreaming now of the arrival of a king and does not give me in marriage to any other young man What a dilemma for me and ignominy for my father ! For this very reason, everyone in the family is now opposed to him. When he goes out, he makes me senseless, and when he comes back, he restores me to sense

by sprinkling this nectar. Mine is a miserable life. It is good that you have come and I may now have the fulfilment of my wishes."

Thus concluding her account, she looked at Haribala. Haribala too did the same, and the four eyes met. Kusumashri gave the proposal and Haribala accepted. The two were married right there. Now, Kusumashri said,

"My dear, it is not safe for us to stay here any longer. If my father returns, we shall be in trouble."

"But the purpose for which I have come remains unfulfilled."

"My dear, you drop the idea of inviting King Vibhisana. Your coming to the country has been as good as inviting him. King Vibhisana will never go out of Lanka. You may say so to your king."

She managed to precure the Chandrahasa sword which belonged to the king and gave it to her husband to carry as a token of his having come to Lanka. Then they collected all useful things from that mansion, including the jar of nectar, and hurried to the sea shore. The *deva* was remembered again and he arrived, helped them to cross the sea and placed them right in the park in the city of Visala.

After Haribala's departure, the king became active again to win over Vasantashri. Everyday, he would send his maidservants to her to bring her to the palace but this had no effect. So one night, the king himself arrived. She could not be discourteous and received the king. The king now tried his best to attract her. He told her that he had sent her husband to Lanka on an important mission and his return was likely to be delayed. On his own part, he could not leave her alone. So he proposed that she should go with him to live at the palace.

Vanantashri silently listened. This was a trap to catch her and she knew not how to keep out. The king continued his overtures and denounced Haribala openly as a bad man. Vasantashri bore all silently. But as the king was about to ransgress the limit of decency, her whole purity burst forth :

"Whatever you do, I shall not deviate from my path." The king too raised his voice and said,

"You foolish girl ! you are unaware of the consequences of transgressing my order. If you do not favourably respond to me, I shall not hesitate to apply force."

Vasantashri was terrified, but to save the situation, she said,

"Your Majesty ! What is the hurry about it ? If there is no good news about my husband, I shall do as Your Majesty will be pleased to suggest"

When all this was happening, Haribala, who had already returned, was watching the whole thing from behind a pillar. He had left his newly-wedded wife in the park and had come to see Vasantashri when the king was there. He was happy at the purity and steadfastness of his first wife Now he stood before her. It was a moment of great joy for Vasantashri She reported all that the king had tried to do during his absence but all had been in vain. Haribala was boiling with rage but this was no occasion to take revenge. On his own part, he narrated his journey to Lanka, his voyage, his experience at the capital of the demons, and his marriage with Kusumashri. Vasantashri now made preparations to receive her co-wife. When the two met, they were locked in deep embrace

The news of Haribala's return from Lanka spread with the speed of a lightning and the king also came to know of it. He had not only come back after inviting King Vibhisana, but had won his daughter's hand. This was highly disheartening, but the king suppressed his real feeling and informed the court as follows : "Gentlemen ! It is a great news today that our good friend and courtier Haribala has returned and will enter the metropolis today. This is a great personal honour to me, to the people and to the country at large. We have to accord him a fitting welcome, for which the city has to be properly decorated. I shall myself receive him in full audience. None of my people should keep aside on this great occasion."

Within a few hours, this announcement reached every

corner of the city. People were happy and they thronged at the park to celebrate the home-coming of the hero. He was duly received there by the king who then brought him to the palace.

The court was overflowing with the people. Very cordially, did His Majesty say to Haribala :

"My worthy friend ! How did you perform this most difficult job ? We are waiting to receive the full account from you "

The following account was given by Haribala :

' Your Gracious Majesty ! The course of events is too long to be narrated within such a short time, but I shall make the long story short. I started for the south, and after having left behind many a dense forest and difficult mountain, at last, I reached the sea As I had no aid to cross it, I stood on the shore thinking. At that time, a terrific giant, who was very hungry, came to me to use me as his food, but I could read his intention and so humbly said that it would be a great occasion for me when my mortal frame would serve as his food, but, said I, my only regret would be that the body would end before it had fulfilled a promise. The giant became impatient and shouted, 'What is your promise ? I shall help you to fulfil it ' But when I told him about it, even the giant was taken aback. 'It is not easy for a human being to cross the sea ; but let me think.' With folded palms. I waited. At last, the giant said, with his dreadful tongue visible : 'A pyre is burning in the forest. Go there and jump into it. You cannot go with this body into Lanka. That may be the only way.' I got alarmed, but I held my assignment above everything, even life, and so without thinking, I jumped straight into to. Soon my body was turned into a pile of ashes. The giant then collected my ashes in a piece of cloth, carried them himself to Lanka and placed them before king Vibhisana. When the King heard the whole story from the giant, he was amazed at my devotion, and at once restored me to life, imparting in the process more beauty than I had before. I bowed before the king who received me very cordially and at once proposed his daughter's

marriage with me. When I sought audience with him to unfold the purpose of my mission, he was pleased to give me leave. After I had suitably done it, the king accepted invitation from Your Majesty and promised to be here at least two days before the ceremony"

Haribala added before concluding :

"With great eagerness, he gave me his daughter's hand and bestowed on me this Chandrahasa sword which belonged to him. When I was making preparations to return, he lifted both of us up, and sent us hither in a moment."

Everywhere there was a murmur of praise and joy. All spoke highly of Haribala's ability, personality and shrewdness. The solitary exception was the chief minister who had no doubt that the king had fallen victim to a humbug So he started hatching another plot against him, and, of course, he had the king's knowledge and consent He arranged a reception for the king at Haribala's residence which Haribala could not decline On the appointed day, the king arrived with his ministers. Wonderful dishes were served to the guests The king saw the two ladies and his lust was again aflame He was now anxious to invite both of them to the palace

Impending evil changes men's ideas. The king again held consultation with the chief minister who suggested that the king alone was entitled to the best things in the kingdom. If the king would so desire, Haribala would have no other alternative but to send the two ladies to the harem.

"But he is my friend", said the king. "Besides, he has rendered important services to the state. It will not be fair on my part to issue such a rude order."

"Your Majesty may again give him an assignment, more difficult this time than previously and thus get rid of him."

The minister gave him a plan which was to send Haribala to invite Yama, the *King of Death*, and Haribala had no other alternative but to agree.

Haribala came back home and narrated the whole thing to his wives. He was very sad but the wives consoled him.

"Even though this time it will be a play with death," they said, "but everything will be okay. The king will be taught a lesson and our purity will remain unmolested."

A huge pyre was erected outside the city. At the right moment, the king came there followed by all the people of the city. Haribala too was there. Everybody was unhappy and there was a suppressed discontent about the king's behaviour. No one had any doubt that the king was intent upon liquidating a very capable man. Haribala became a hero in the eyes of the people who praised him in all directions for his merits, for his charities and for his keen intellect and personality.

The *deva* was invoked by Haribala at the right moment. He arrived at once He heard about the new difficulty and said :

"You go back to your own mansion and I replace you here. I shall jump into the fire and the mean ideas of the king will not materialise."

This was immediately put into effect. At the proper time, a figure looking like Haribala jumped into the pyre. Soon the body was reduced to a pile of ashes. The king was happy. He was sure that Haribala would return no more.

It was mid-night and Haribala was talking with his wives. The king unexpectedly arrived. Haribala hid himself in an antechamber, and the two ladies got ready to receive the king and teach him a proper lesson. The king came in and said, "Now Haribala has repaired to the city of Yama, and there is none to protect you here. So I have come to invite both of you to the palace. You are very lucky and you shall be my queens" The two ladies now shouted with rage :

"The king is expected to suppress the wicked. But when the king himself is a rogue, who is to suppress him ? You are not our saviour. You want to ruin us We do not want to look at you. Why do you then come here again and again ?"

But the king would not see the right way. He went on repeating his overtures but they were repeatedly turned down by the two ladies. Kusumashri gave a final warning. The king was now ready to apply force. She at once invoked her special powers, tied the king and hurled him headlong down. The king lost some of his teeth.

The king lay there helpless and unattended by anyone for several hours. He was in extreme pain, with blood and saliva oozing from his mouth. But much more than that was the humiliation to which he had been put. When he had somewhat recovered, the ladies took pity on him. They made him promise not to repeat such a behaviour in future and then he was set free.

Wounded and humiliated, the king returned to the palace. In the morning, he took the chief minister into confidence and narrated the whole thing to him. The chief minister was now afraid of his own safety and resolved never to tender any more counsel to the king.

Haribala was highly pleased at what his wives had done. Said he, "Never tolerate any torture. If it is there, get rid of it. Otherwise, it gets enlongened."

Haribala now remembered the *deva* for consultation, who appeared at once They prepared a plan as to how best to present the whole thing at the court next morning. The *deva* imparted a great glow to Haribala's body and dressed him in divine robes and ornaments. A dreadful attendant was created to accompany him to the court.

In the morning, Haribāla, duly attended, appeared at the court. The king was taken aback to see Haribala come back to life from the other world. The whole court was astonished. Had not everybody seen Haribala turned into ashes only the previous evening ? On behalf of everybody, however, the king said,

"Haribala, we are all very happy to see you back. We are now anxious to know how you reached the abode of Death, how you were received there, what special things did you notice, if Death has been kind enough to accept our invitation and who this man with you is."

Haribala now displayed the marvel of his intellect and imagination. He started his narrative :

"Your Majesty ! After my mortal frame had been turned into ashes, I went to the abode of Death where at the main entrance I met its keeper, Baidhyata. He announced my arrival to Chitragupta, the keeper of records. Chitragupta was somewhat surprised to see me there before time. When I told him the purpose of my coming, he welcomed me and arranged an interview with Death I was conducted into the presence of His Majesty the Yama by two attendants named Chanda and Mahachanda."

Taking meticulous care to provide the details, he continued :

"One who goes on a mission to an auspicious man gets unexpected results. This happened to me. Death usually never looks at a stranger with grace. His big and red-shot eyes, his curved brows, long teeth, curled hairs, pitchy dark complexion, like a newmoon night, fat limbs—all generate fear. If he emits a shout, that causes instantaneous death to many. I was very nervous to see all this. But in a moment, when his eyes fell on me, he was a changed person. His eyes showered nectar on me and he was in a happy mood. At once, I and the two attendants bowed before him. Then the attendants submitted my file before him for his perusal. Its top flap contained a note as follows :

> Haribala is exceedingly faithful to his master. He never cares for his own life for the fulfilment of even the most difficult of assignments given by the master. It is in fulfilment of one such assignment that he is here as his master's envoy.

Death was mightily pleased to read this note. He cordially received me and gave me a seat in the midst of his own courtiers. He asked me many questions about my family, Your Majesty, the chief minister and about the country. At the right moment, I unfolded the purpose of my visit and Death was gracious enough to accept the

invitation. A note to this effect was taken by his secretary Tamrachuda, who was in attendance with writing material ready at hand "

To make the story still more fascinating, he added,

"Then Death introduced me to the members of his royal household. His parents. Surya and Sanjnavati, his principal queen Dhumorna, his brother Sani, his sister Jamuna, were all present They were very kind to me and gave me company for several hours. Then I was shown round the capital city I saw so many things in such a short time that it is difficult to recount them all

"When after this it was time for me to return, Death was gracious enough to send through me immediate invitation to Your Majesty, the chief minister and other dignitaries of the state to see him in his own citadel. He was keen to bestow on Your Majesty much wealth and the hands of his daughter. He offered me very valuable gifts of robes and ornaments and hundreds of dancing girls, of which I accepted only very few. Death was insistent to make me accept at least one dancing girl, the very best of the lot, To guide me in my return journey, and to convey a formal invitation to Your Majesty on behalf of himself, Death has deputed with me this envoy of his own."

As previously arranged, the envoy now came forward and repeated the invitation. He requested the king to honour it without delay. The courtiers knew not what to make of it, but at last with the consent of all, the king accepted the invitation.

At the king's order, a big pyre was set ablaze outside the city around which were assembled the king, his chief minister and other ministers, high dignitaries of the state and the citizens. Now, who was to plunge first into the flame and be the first to reach the citadel of Death ? After much consideration, the chief minister became the recipient of this signal honour and was soon turned into a pile of ashes. Next was the king's turn. As he proceeded towards the pyre, Haribala could no longer contain himself.

He was sorry to think that so many would die in ignorance and foolishness by simply relying on his words. He caught the king's feet and said,

"Your Majesty ! The culprit has been punished and Your Majesty need not take a plunge. All the wrong steps you took were at the advice of the chief minister and he is now no more to do any further mischief Repent not about what is dead and past ; strive to make the future glorious."

The king was thus humiliated in public and was deeply ashamed for all that he had done, Gradually, he found a profound indifference overtaking him. He returned to the palace and married his daughter with Haribala. Then he gave charge of his kingdom to him and renounced the world in order to spend the remaining portion of his life worthily in spiritual pursuits.

When Vasantasena, Vasantashri's father, came to know the happy turn in the fortune of his daughter, he had no more reason to remain angry with her. Besides, he had grown old and wanted to retire, and none was more suitable than Haribala to take charge of his kingdom. So he entrusted his kingdom to him and renounced the world.

Despite so much good fortune, Haribala never forgot about his vow. Often his mind went back to the day when the *muni* had induced him to accept a fraction of a vow. It was this small thing that had helped him to rise to the pinacle of glory and earthly prosperity. So, thought he, if he would practise the whole vow, how much more would he not achieve ! Although a king, he always cherished high thinking He would not only himself remain immersed in lofty things, he would even inspire his three wives to do the same. He brought his first wife Prachanda to live at the palace. In his old age, he renounced the world and through the practice of penance and austerities attained a very high degree of knowledge.

KING HANSA

King Hansa reigned at Rajpur. He was famous as a just and fair king. Being a *sravaka,* he never resorted to falsehood to meet any situation. Thus he was reputed for his devotion to truth.

On the summit of Mount Ratnasringa, there was a beautiful temple dedicated to the first *tirthankara* Rshabha. On the full-moon day in the month of Chaitra, there used to be a special ceremony in honour of the Lord when people from far and near flocked there. King Hansa thought of visiting the temple on that day. He gave temporary charge of his kingdom to his council of ministers and started with the members of the royal household and others for the fulfilment of his spiritual mission.

After the departure of king Hansa, another king, Arjuna by name, who was his adversary and who was on the look-out for this opportunity, laid seize of Hansa's city. Hansa's army was not only defeated but was routed and some of the leading generals lost their lives on the battle field. The rest fled the country. There was none to protect the city or the citizens. The victor-king captured the palace and the treasury, sat on the throne and rigorously enforced his authority all over the kingdom.

When King Hansa was only half-way to his destination, the news of this misfortune reached him. A messenger sent by the minister, Sumati, narrated the developments at the kingdom and said in conclusion :

"Your Majesty ! It may now be for your graciousness to consider what may be needful."

The king's courtiers were very much perturbed. They said, "Your Majesty, we should drop the idea of pilgrimage

and reverse our steps towards the city. No enemy, howsoever powerful, would stand thy presence. After the enemy is thrown out, we may resume our pilgrimage."

The king did not take much time to give his decision. Said he, "Prosperity and adversity are beyond human control. The real factor determining them are *karma* acquired in the past. Pious deeds are often obstructed by idleness and doubt. Since we are out on a holy mission, I do not consider it worthwhile to retrace our steps. We shall think of the city on our return. It can be reacquired."

So the king and his party went on. But his men were not very happy at the decision, for they had their families in the city and they were anxious about their safety. So one by one they began to drop out. But the king did not waver from his goal. At last, only one umbrella-bearer was left with him.

The king had no more a guide with him and he was now on a wrong route. He was in a forest, whose density increased as he proceeded. He became anxious about his own safety in the hands of the aborigins living in that forest. So he took off his costly robes and jewellery and entrusted them to his companion. The two were now moving separately.

The king had not gone very far when a deer came running and disappeared in the forest. It was followed by a hunter with a bow raised. When he asked the king about the deer, he was in a dilemma. He thought : 'If I express ignorance, I break my vow. If I speak the truth, the poor animal will be in danger. It will be good if I can avoid both the situations.' Meanwhile, the hunter repeated the question and the king said :

"I have lost my way."

"I am asking about the deer. Did it come hither ? If it did, whither is it gone ?"

"I am king Hansa."

The hunter was excited at this evasive reply.

"I did not ask, sir, who you are. I am asking about the deer. Tell me, if you know, whither it is gone."

The king wavered not from his plan but calmly replied :

"I belong to Rajpur."

The hunter was now enraged.

"Why don't you give a straight reply to my question ? How do you gain by talking irrelevant things ?"

"I am a kshatriya."

"Are you deaf ? I ask you something and you say something else."

"I shall go the way you indicate to me."

"You get out of my sight. I have no need of you. I have for nothing wasted my time with you."

So saying the hunter went on his way and the king went on his own. After he had gone some distance, the king saw a *muni* which he deemed very unusual in this dense forest. The king paid his respectful homage and obeisance and the *muni* went away. Immediately thereafter, two *bhils* (aborigins) came running to the king, and said :

"Here in this forest lives our chief named Sura As he was about to set out to-day with his men to commit theft, he came across a man with tonsured head. This he considered very inauspicious and so he has sent us to kill that fellow. Tell us whither is he gone."

The king was in a fix again, but to avoid the situation, he said, "Beg your pardon. I did not exactly follow what you said."

"Well, sir, did you see a man wth tonsured head passing by this way ? We are keen to know which way he has gone. If you give us the direction, we shall follow him and kill him."

The king came out with a beautiful reply :

"Men ! One who sees tells not ; one who tells sees not."

The *bhils* thought that the fellow had failed to understand them. So they repeated what they had said before. The king also repeated his own statement.

"You are a mad man. Get out of our way. We have unnecessarily wasted our time with you."

It was evening when the king stopped beneath a tree to take rest. In a nearby grove were hidden a few thieves who were discussing their plan. On the third night, they said, they would raid a holy company of monks and their followers that would be passing by that way. The king heard this and became anxious about the safety of the monks.

When the king was thinking about this, a party of policemen came there in search of the thieves. They had prior information about their plans, it seemed. At first, they took the king to be of their party but soon they realised their mistake and thought of using him, if possible, for their own purpose. They came to the king and said,

"Sir, in the course of the next few days, a holy company is scheduled to pass by this way. We have information that some thieves have plans to plunder the company. There is a city called Shrinagar which is at a distance of 10 *yojanas* from here. King Ripumardan reigns there. He has deputed us to look after the safe movement of this campany, and we have orders to arrest the thieves, and even to kill them, if necessary. So we are here in search of them. If you have any information about them, we shall be glad to have it."

The truthful never transgress their vow; yet they do not open the door to harm, unpleasantness and injury. The king was not in very dissimilar situation. He had to uphold truth and the safety of the holy company, and yet he could not expose the thieves to harm. So after a moment's thought he said,

"Friends, why do you bother about the thieves? Your assignment is to guard the company, and this will be done if you stay with it. If the thieves raid it, you can see them right there and do the needful"

The policemen were impressed by these words, and they turned their steps to where the holy company was.

Religious behaviour has its impact even on the most cruel. The thieves heard everything the king had said, and they were very grateful to him.

"Surely, this must be a god among men," they said. "It seems he knows of our presence here and yet he dropped no hint about it."

They all came out of the grove and stood before the king. They saluted him and said,

"Sir, you are our saviour and we are very grateful to you. You knew about our presence in the grove and yet you gave no hint. This surely reveals your greatness. We are now, sir, at your service. What can we do for you ?"

The king offered them good counsel and advised them to desist from theft. Thieves by profession, they could not agree to it, but they promised not to touch the holy men or render any harm to them.

A more rigorous ordeal still waited for the king. This concerned the safety of his own person. Hardly had he traversed some distance than a party of horsemen stopped him and said,

"Did you see king Hansa passing by this way ?"

"How do you feel interested in him ?

Narrating the purpose of their mission, the horsemen said, "We are the very trusted men of King Arjuna. He is now in occupation of Raipur and King Hansa of the republic has fled for the safety of his life. We are now in search of him and we have orders to kill him. Tell us soon if you have seen him."

It was now no easy task for the king to give a reply or to evade it, and yet he was determined not to transgress his vow. Even at this moment of the greatest danger to his own person, he placed truth above self and said in a calm and steadfast voice,

"Friends, the man before you is King Hansa himself, after whom you are here. He is in your hands. Do as may suit your purpose."

So saying, he stood fast, with his eyes shut. He chanted the holy *namokara* within himself and withdrew the attachment to the mortal frame. Spiritual power tremendously grew. This was a moment of triumph for the king Just at that moment, a *deva* of right outlook made his appearance there and said, "Oh king ! I am overwhelmed by thy steadfastness. I have thrown out thy enemies from the city. It is safe now. You are out on pilgrimage and to-day is the proper day to worship the idol. The place is yet far off, and you can by no means reach there in time for the worship. My chariot is ready. May I take you thither !"

The King was overwhelmed at the miraculous turn of events. Now, in the company of the *deva* in the latter's chariot, the king reached the summit of Ratnasringa in time for the worship. This was the fructification of his mission for which he started and because of which he underwent hard ordeals. The *deva* then escorted the king back to his own city, where his adversary, King Arjuna, had already been thrown into the prison At the king's earnest request, the *deva* released him. After this, the *deva* deputed four of his trusted lieutenants to look after the safety of the king and the kingdom, and departed for his celestial home.

LAKSMIPUNJA

At Hastinapur, there lived a merchant named Sudharma. A devout Jaina, the merchant was very poor and ran a petty business. His wife's name was Dhanna. One night, as she was fast asleep, she saw in a dream the Goddess Shree (the goddess of prosperity) in the Lotus Lake Dressed in the best of her robes and ornaments, she was seated on a lotus. Dhanna woke up after this good dream, and when she apprised her husband of this, he said, "Now our days of woe must be nearing their end. Indications are that a boy will be born in the family and his fame will go far and near."

With this sweet thought in her mind, Dhanna could not sleep for the rest of the night.

The arrival of a pious soul becomes a turning point in the life of a family From the day Dhanna had dreamt the dream, there was a turn for the better in Sudharma's material condition The profit from business also looked up. But Sudharma's depression was not yet over The anxiety about how best to accord a welcome to the in-coming pious soul always haunted him One day, as he was standing in the courtyard with this thought up in his mind, a portion of the earth slipped from beneath his feet and peeped through it a jar full of gold and gems This was a major turning point Henceforth, fortune smiled on him and he was living in a mansion of his own, served by many servants and attendants

At the right moment, a male child was born to Dhanna. On the third day, he was exposed to the sun and the moon. On the sixth night, the mother kept awake to worship the diety of Birth and on the eleventh day, the house was cleaned in the customary manner. On the twelfth day, relations and friends were invited to dinner and the boy's naming ceremony was performed. He was to be henceforth called Laksmipunja.

When Laksmipunja was eight, he was married to a beautiful damsel from a rich merchant's family. He was a happy young man enjoying all the pleasures of life. One day, a thought came into his mind : 'Wherefrom has all this non-ending treasure come ?' On the same day, he had the following revelation about his previous birth.

* * * *

There was a city named Laksmidhara where lived a merchant named Gunadhara. He was rich but he was a man of very simple and unassuming habits One day, he went to the park, where a *muni* was giving a sermon on *adattadana*, i e, not to acquire unless a thing is bestowed or bequeathed. When the sermon was over, the merchant came near the *muni*, paid him homage and obeisance and took the vow of *adattadana*.

The merchant started with a convoy of 500 carts loaded with merchandise for another country When the convoy reached a dense forest, the merchant felt that it would be risky for him to move with it, and so on horse-back, he separated from it, taking an obscure route made of foot-prints. On the way, he came across a costly necklace, which he did not even care to look at. As he wanted to proceed fast, he struck the horse with his heels and put it to gallop. At one place, as the earth was removed by the horse's hoof, the merchant saw a jar full of treasure, but, with perfect detachment, he put the horse to a still greater speed. But ill-luck prevailing, before the horse could go far, it dropped down exhausted and died on the spot. This was a great shock for the merchant, who felt that the horse had met with its end prematurely because of him. So he said aloud : "If anyone can restore the horse to life, I shall give him my whole treasure." But, as none came, the merchant discarded the dead horse and proceeded on foot.

The merchant was now proceeding alone through the dense forest. He became very thirsty but there was no water to be seen anywhere in the neighbourhood. Soon he discovered a leather-jar full of water hanging from a tree.

He came beneath the tree, but as he remembered his vow, he shouted :

"To whom does the jar belong ? I am very thirsty."

At the other branch of the same tree, there was a cage from where a parrot responded.

"This belongs to a medical man. He has gone in search of herbs in the denser parts of the forest. Nobody knows when he may come back. If you are thirsty, you may very well drink from the jar. But neither its owner nor his agent is present here at this moment "

Gunadhara was so badly thirsty that his eyes had almost shot out and it was not possible for him either to speak or to walk. Still he said to the parrot, "Thirst may take my life, but I don't accept a thing not properly given to me." He sat down with his eyes closed. When after sometime he opened them, he found to his surprise that neither the leather-jar nor the parrot and the cage were there ; instead, there stood a *deva* who said,

"Sire, I am a resident of Vipula which is located atop the mountain Vaitadhya. My name is Sura and I am a Vidyadhara. My father who has joined the holy order resides in a park outside your city. I had been there to pay respect to him just at the time when you took the vow of not accepting anything not duly given. You are a merchant and you have to move to far-off lands on business. So I wondered if it would be possible for you to honour your vow. It was for testing you, therefore, that I laid a few traps, the necklace, you remember, the jar full of treasure. It was I again that made the horse die. The jar, the cage and the parrot were all placed by me on the tree."

So saying, he recalled the necklace, the jar, the horse and many other things, and made a gift of them to the merchants.

Gunadhara—"Why do you give me all these ?"

Vidyadhara—"It was my father who told me to keep away from superfluous riches, but I did not care to listen

A parrot responded, "This belongs to a medical man'

to him. For, I could not free myself from attachment. But to-day I have seen in you one who has conquered attachment, and this has really inspired me. I have now resolved to court total detachment I hold you as my master, and I want to make a gift of my all to my master."

Gunadhara—"But why don't you return them to their proper owners ?"

Vidhydhara—"Well, sir, all these belong to me, and all these are yours now."

Gunadhara—"Very good. But I too am under a vow to bestow my all to one who restores the horse to life ; and since you have done it, you are henceforth the rightful owner of everything I have."

Vidyadhara—"Sir, you are my superior, and so I cannot accept your treasure, but, as you say, you are under a vow and so you can no longer retain its ownership. What will happen to all this then ?" Gunadhara gave a solution.

"Let us do one thing Let none of us use it. Let it be given as a gift for some public, social or religious purpose."
The solution appealed to both.

From that time, merchant Gunadhara changed the course of his life. He became immersed in *dharma-dhyana* (spiritual meditation). Thus he ended his life.

The same merchant has been reborn as Laksmipunja with so much affluence of wealth and treasure.

* * * *

This revelation revived Laksmipunja's memory of his previous birth. His detachment came up soon and he renounced everything. He entered the spiritual order and lived therein enriching his soul practising penance and restraint.

MAIRAVATI

Ripumardana was the ruling king at the city of Ksitipratisthita and Madanarekha was his first queen. She was a devoted *sravika* who was acquainted with the principles of religion. She gave birth to a daughter who was named Mairavati. She was her mother's daughter, a mixture of beauty, conduct and intellect. The king made proper arrangement for her education and very soon she became proficient in all the branches of learning. Her spiritual education was in charge of her mother.

One day, when the court was in session, Mairavati was sent there by her mother. She was in the best of her robes and ornaments. The princess bowed before her father, the king, who affectionately received her and made her sit on the throne with himself. The king had a proud bend of mind. Addressing the courtiers, he said,

"Do you think there is another monarch on earth who has as much material prosperity, illustrious court and gifted kinsmen as I have ?"

"Your Majesty, what to speak of having them, in reality, they cannot conceive them even in dreams.

The princess, however, did not agree. She signified her dissent by nodding her head bothways and added,

"Sire, whatever the courtiers have stated is stark flattery, a total violation of truth. On this earth, there are many monarchs who are in possession of equivalent treasure, court and kinsmen. Are these really things to be proud of ?"

This observation was not palatable to the king who overlooked it.

He asked the courtiers again :

"By whose favour are you all happy ?"

"Your Majesty ! Can there be any question or doubt about it ? We are all happy because of thy favour. Can anybody shower happiness on others save the *kalpa* tree ?"

The princess, however, disagreed again.

"You are all liars indulging in naked flattery. Acquisition of good and evil is the outcome of *karma*, beyond the capacity of human agency." Then, turning to the king, she said,

"Father, if you are the real determinant, why don't you make everybody equally happy ? Some of your courtiers are more happy and others are less happy. This is the outcome of their respective *karma*. You are only an instrument in its operation. Speaking about myself, my birth in your royal household and the affluence I enjoy are all the outcome of inexorable *karma*."

The king's rage now reached the highest pitch. He burst out :

"Foolish girl ! Who has taught you all this garulity ? Meseems that in the garb of my daughter, you are a real enemy. You should know it for certain that it is my favourable glance that can make a poor man rich, and it is my angry glance that can ruin one for ever. If you agree with me, you will be married in some prosperous household ; otherwise, you will just be disposed of to some poor man."

"Father, you are mistaken. If I have not righteous *karma* to favour me, even the best of grooms chosen by you will turn pauper. But if my favourable *karma* be up, even a commoner may rise to the acme of prosperity, and acquire a kingdom. Pride is the virus of worldly life. So, sire, get rid of it."

The king could no longer contain himself. At once he gave the following orders to his men :

"Go thee and bring forth one who may be the poorest, the meanest, the lowliest, and one in wretched health."

The princess sat calm. The king's men went to the central square and picked up a man who was gasping

because of ill-health. They brought him before the king. His ears were rotten, nose dull and flat, lips long and projected and cheeks marked by depression. His body was all bones and no flesh, with distinct marks of leprosy. The king's pride was now gratified. He turned to the princess and said,

"Well, madam ! In deference to your *karma*, this man has been brought here. It is my order that you marry him."

The truly great have no gap in their profession and practice. The princess slowly came down and courted the leper as her husband. The whole court was stunned and mortified, but not the king. His pride and vengeance were fully gratified The princes was then deprived of her jewellery and rich robes and turned out from the city.

The two took shelter in the precincts of a temple to spend the night there. The leper's compassion was up. Addressing the princess, he said :

"Noble lady ! Whatever the king has done has been unjust and malicious. This is neither good for thee nor for the royal household. Thou art a lovely damsel of noble birth, and I am only a poor leper. I am not fit for thee. So, madam, I regret my inability to accept thee and gladly do I permit thee to give me up. You forget about me and marry some suitable young man. I have no doubt, wherever you go, you will be an asset."

The princess appealed : "My dear ! What do I hear from thee ? When sins are up, one is born as a woman ; and for a woman to give up purity is more sinful. You suggest me to do that. Youth, beauty, wealth—these come and go, but purity is a rarest acquisition. You may be rich or poor, well or ill, but you are my all. In future, may I not hear what you have said just now."

The leper was happy at this unusual reply. The sun had gone down and the leper was asleep. Only the princess was awake. She saw an old lady coming towards her. A young man accompanied her. The lady came to the princess and said,

"My daughter ! I am the deity of this city. I am deeply mortified at thy father's behaviour. So I have come to help thee."

Then pointing to the young man she said,

"This beautiful and lucky young man is meant for thee. You give up this leper and be his wife. You will be happy with him. I shall help you in all respects."

This was really a trap and how many would come out successful ? Mairavati was one of those that are steadfast in all situations. She said :

"Mother ! I haven't enough words to thank thee. But I am duly married with this man with the consent of my father. So how do you think I can give him up ? A woman courts a husband but once. He may be a leper, but to me he is the king of kings, my all. I only beg and entreat that this man whom you have brought with you may be withdrawn and restored to his proper place."

The deity took this refusal as an affront to herself. She hurled the princess into the sky saying :

"If you take my advice, you will be happy ; otherwise, I will kill you."

The princess was helpless but she was incessantly uttering the holy *namokara*. And them a miracle happened. There was neither the deity nor the leper ; instead, a divine person stood before her. He said to the princess :

"There is a city named Manipur on the Vaitadhya hill. I am Manichuda, its king. Once, while wandering, I heard somebody say,

> Crows are black everywhere
> Parrots are ever green,
> Happy are happy everywhere
> Misery the wretches are in !

I thought of testing the truth of this and changed myself into a leper. Just then the king's men picked me up.

"I am the deity of this city I have come to help thee."

The rest of the story is well-known to you. You did not deviate from your resolve. You are really praiseworthy and honorable. How lucky am I and how lucky is my city to have in thee a wife and a queen, acquired so unexpectedly."

The princess knew not if it was a dream or reality She could not rely on her audio-visual organs, but this much she was confident about that purity always shines She had a feeling that it was her purity incarnate that stood before her in body and flesh The princess conveyed her gratefulness to the divine person, her husband, and acknowledged this turn in her luck to be the outcome of *karma*.

The two now happily lived there for some time One day, Manichuda said to his wife :

"My dear, I want to see my father-in-law, your father, and teach him a lesson for all that he did to you. Can you suggest how best this should be done ?"

"My dear, you make him appear before you dressed as a peasant. That will crush his pride for ever."

This was done By dint of his divine power, Manichuda raised a mighty army and laid seize of the city of his father-in-law Then he sent a messenger to King Ripumardana to tell him in unmistakable terms to dress like a peasant and submit to him, failing which he would be duly punished

The king became red at once and was about to accept the challenge, but the minister prevailed upon him and said,

"Your Majesty : One should act with due caution even when the adversary is your equal, the more so when, as in the present case, he is a superior. I think, in the interest of the kingdom and in that of our own, you should act as the messenger desires."

The king realised the gravity of the situation and softened. Now, dressed as a peasant, he came to meet King Manichuda Manichuda, however, fittingly received him and immediately gave him a change of dress. Soon the king's eyes fell on his own daughter who was seated on the

throne. The king bent his head in shame. Mairavati said, "Father, be not remorseful. The leper to whom you gave me away has luckily turned out to be a divine personality. We need acknowledge that this is the play of *karma.*"

The king was happy to see the turn in his daughter's fortune. Manichuda apprised him of all that had happened since the princess was banished from the city. Then he added :

"Sire, blessed are you that in your royal household has been born such a precious soul as your daughter. And doubly blessed am I that has acquired such a pious thing without any effort."

After this, the *deva* returned to his city on the Vaitadhya hill in the company of his consort. Always steadfast in purity, Mairavati spen the rest of her life devoted to spiritual practices.

DHANASARA

A merchant named Dhanasara used to lived in Mathura. He was the owner of a vast fortune of 620 million gold coins, but he was extremely niggardly and would not even give as much as a copper or a nickel. He was well-known for his wealth as well as niggardliness.

Money is acquired both by honest and dishonest means. Money honestly earned does not become a source of trouble, but not so money earned through unfair means. Besides, the latter does not last as much as money honestly earned. One day, Dhanasara went to take stock of the treasure kept underground, but to his great shock, he found it all changed into charcoal with reptiles crawling through them. As he was brooding over this great loss, there came the news of the loss of a ship loaded with cargo on the high seas. And then followed a third shock about a highway robbery in which a convoy of his carrying precious merchandise had been looted These made him feel so helpless and wretched that he saw darkness all around Holding his forehead between his palms, he was bewailing for his ill-luck.

When the unfavourable *karma* is up, whatever a man may do will inevitably go against him. Dhanasara borrowed one million gold coins from a relation and went abroad to do business But as ill-luck would have it, there was a ship-wreck and his entire gold fell into the sea. He could save himself with difficulty by catching a floating log and swimming ashore.

He spent a day on the sea shore and on the next day he moved to a nearby park. There he saw a *muni* under the shade of a mango tree giving sermon to assembled people. Dhanasara also sat down to listen. When the sermon was over, the merchant came near the *muni*, paid him homage and obeisance and said,

"Oh *muni* ! For what *karma* did I acquire so much wealth and for what *karma* did I lose my all ?"

The *muni* said,

"Oh merchant ! All these happen as per *karma* which is powerful. In Dhatakikhand, there was a city named Ambica. Two brothers lived there. The elder brother was always generous helping the needy, but the younger brother was miserly and did not like the charities made by his elder brother. When he saw him making charities, he would even lose his temper. Such a situation continued for some time and then the younger brother could toletate it no more and separated But even after this, the elder brother's wealth, instead of diminishing, went on increasing. So the younger brother lodged a complain with the king and induced him to take custody of his property and wealth. The elder brother was deeply wounded at this and he renounced the world. After his death, by virtue of his good deeds, he became a *deva* heaven.

The younger brother was now bitterly criticised by the people and he could no longer remain in the society. So he joined the order of some heretics and on completion of his life was born as one of the Asurakumaras in hell. Having completed his life there, he is reborn in you. In your previous life, you disapproved of gifts and charities and so you are still a miser. You deprived your brother of his rightful wealth and so you are deprived now. And, well, your elder brother, having spent his life in Saudharmaloka, he was born as a merchant in Tamralipti. He earned much wealth and spent many years enjoying material happiness. Then he gave up his all to join the order of monks. He is the person now speaking to you."

Dhanasara was sorry, and was yet amazed to hear this revealing account. He fell at the feet of his elder brother, the *muni*, and begged to be forgiven. He took vow not to indulge in sinful acts any more and to donate three-fourths of his earning, retaining for personal use only a quarter. This had instantaneous effect. By the mercy of a *deva*, all his wealth and affluence that had been lost were restored.

Henceforth, Dhanasara become a devout *sravaka* who regularly spent his wealth on seven worthy items, viz., Jaina abodes, Jaina idols, Jaina literature, Jaina monks, Jaina nuns, Jaina *sravakas* and Jaina *sravikas*. This was a real turning point in his life and the rest of it was worthily lived.

KESAVA

At Kundanpur, there lived a merchant named Jasodhara. His wife's name was Rambha. He had two sons by her, Hansa and Kesava There was much cordiality between the two brothers. They used to read and play together. One day, while taking a stroll, they reached a park where they saw a *muni* who was giving a discourse. The two brothers listened to him and were very much inspired by the *muni's* words. In the presence of the *muni*, they took the vow of not taking food at night. The *muni* heartily approved of their resolve and gave them inspiration to remain steadfast in their vow.

The brothers returned home. Now, before the sun went down, they asked their mother to serve them food. The mother understood not why. The family was in the habit of taking food at night When the mother came to know of their vow, she became furious. She not only rebuked them, but told them not to indulge in much odd things. That night, food was prepared after a quarter of the night was over. As Jasodhra sat for the dinner, he enquired about his sons. They came in but would not touch anything because of the vow. This made Jasodhara too furious. Said he,

"You are just kiddies, and it seems you have turned into agents of religion This is very bad. I won't allow this in my family." But the two brothers remained steadfast and went to bed without food.

Jasodhara tried to argue with the boys.

"This is neither our habit nor customary with the family."

But it was all in vain So he asked his wife not to serve any food during the day so that they would be coaxed

to take food at night. The next day, the whole scene repeated again. The boys asked the mother to serve food before sun-set. But the mother said, "Food will be ready at night. There is nothing remnant from the morning which you can take. So, like good boys, you should have your dinner at night with your father. It is your duty to abide by the wishes of your parents."

The two brothers went to their father's shop without taking anything and attended their regular duties as everyday. Jasodhara gave strict instruction to his wife to remain strict and give no indulgence At night, the father again asked the boys to dine with him, but both of them declined The next day the father imposed on them such a heavy load of duties that they had no time to take food, and at night they would not take it, though offered.

In this way, five days passed On the sixth day, Jasodhara sent for both of them First he tried to pursuade them to give up the vow He said that their mother was on fast on account of them, that everybody in the family was unhappy He told them that even the learned people took food during the first quarter of the night and that, therefore, there was nothing wrong in it.

Hansa was already very hungry and slowly he was giving way. He looked at Kesava who stood steadfast like a rock. Kesava told his father in most unmistakable terms that it was none of his business to interfere into his affair and that he would do as suited him best.

Jasodhara could no longer contain himself. In extreme rage, he brust out,

"What do ye say, ye bad boy ? If you do not obey me, I do not shelter one like you to stain my family. Get out at once I do not want as much to see your face."

The final decision for him was thus given by his father and it was irrevocable. But Kesava wavered not. He preferred to court hardship to submitting to threat or giving up the vow. He fled the parental home. As Hansa was about to follow him, the father held his hand. He induced

him not to go but to give up the fast and live happily. Hansa was a weak personality. He submitted and sat down to dine.

After leaving his home, Kesava covered a long distance on foot He did not stop even when it was evening. At last, he reached a *yaksa* temple where pepole were assembled to offer worship. The ritual was over and they were about to partake out of the offerings when Kesava stepped in. Everybody was happy to get an opportunity to entertain a guest after the worship. They welcomed him and offered him some fruits and sweets and begged him to accept them. Kesava was in a fix. If he accepted the offer, he would break the vow ; if he declined, he would deprive the worshippers of a chance of entertaining a guest. But he gathered courage and said,

"Friends : I am under a vow not to take anything at night, and whatever the difficulty of a situation, I cannot transgress it. It is on this very issue that I have left my home. How can I give up my vow here ?"

People were irritated at these words.

"But, sir, you are our guest and to entertain a guest is a part of worship. You should not deprive us of it. Is it the object of your vow to disoblige us ? All our worship will be in vain if you do not accept our offer. Besides, unless you take food, none else can take it, which means that you compel all of us to go without food. Religion does not permit you to give pain to others. In the interest of religion and greater good, therefore, you take food with us."

But Kesava did not waver. When arguments and counterarguments had reached a high pitch, and they could not agree, just then a giant emerged out of the idol who advanced towards Kesava with blood-shot eyes and said,

"Kesava ! How haughty you must be. My devotees are all on fast and you make pretext of your vow. Come and take food. Otherwise, I shall wipe you out of existence with my mace."

Kesava bore this with patience. He was faced with a fire ordeal, But his mind did not approve the idea of transgressing the vow. That would be as good as his sacrificing all. So he stood firm, as if in a trance, and gave no reply. He was ready for the worst.

The *yaksa* read into Kesava's mind. He was pretty certain that his power was useless to move Kesava So he changed his tone and advised his own devotees to get hold of Kasava's master, the Jaina monk, who had fixed him in the vow and who alone was now capable to change his mind and induce him to take food Some of them started at once and returned after some time with a monk, named Dharmaghosa, who was tied fast with ropes. As soon as he saw Kesava, he began to lament Kesava looked at him and took no time to understand that this was not his master. It was all a false game which the *yaksa* was playing Now, addressing the monk, the *yaksa* said.

"Monk ! You permit this follower of yours to take food Otherwise, you will be put to death.

Turning to Kesava the monk said,

"Kesava ! My child ! you see, for thy sake, my life is in danger. You should not behave like a bigot. In transgressing a vow for the sake of a *deva*, one's own master and a holy company, one does not really fall from the path If you have any cosideration for me, you give up the vow but once and take the offering."

Kesava replied at once,

"My master prescribes not to take food at night. He follows the path of the Jina who is free from all attachments. The path has no corner for fear So a man who gives a different prescription out of fear cannot be my master. This is all a magic created by the *yaksa*."

The *yaksa* was not prepared for this. He shouted :

"Ye wretch ! Take food at once or goes down thy master rolling on the ground the very next moment."

Kesava—"This is not my master. He would never step

into a trap set by you. You will never have the courage to look into his face."

The monk—'Kesava. It is wrong on your part to question my identity. I am the same monk who fixed you in the vow. You take food so that I may be saved."

Tears were rolling down the monk's cheeks, his voice was shaky, his lips were quivering and he was not able even to stand any longer. The *yaksa* caught hold of him and dashed him against the ground. The monk fell senseless. Then while picking up the mace, he said to Kesava.

"Kesava ! Nothing is lost yet. If you are prepared to partaks of the offering, I shall restore your master to life. I shall even consider bestowing a vast kingdom on you. You will be rolling in luxury. But if this is not acceptable to you, then you will suffer the same fate as your master. I shall break you into pieces with this mace"

In a firm voice, Kesava said,

"This is not my master. You say, you can restore a dead man to life ; then what prevents you to restore your own devotees to life who may be dead ? You say, you can bestow a kingsom on me. Well, if you bestow it on your own followers, they may be a little better off. I have no need of thy kingdom. As to death, it is inevitable to mortal beings. I am not afraid of its touch."

The *yaksa* now changed his strategy and changed into a friend. He took Kesava into his embrace and said,

"Truly, this man is not your master. He is the creation of my magical powers to test your steadfastness. It is also true that none can restore a dead man to life, nor can one bestow a kingdom on another. Then at a silent hint from the *yaksa*, the devotees who stood all around said,

"Well, sir, we understand that you are on fast for the past one week. You are tired too for covering such a long distance on foot. We are sorry, we too have given you much trouble. We think now that you enjoy a well-earned rest. If you will take food only after sun-rise, we shall also do the same."

They provided him with a cushion and Kesava lay on it Soon he was fast asleep.

After some time, the *yaksa* woke him up to announce the sun-rise and invite him to partake of the offer.

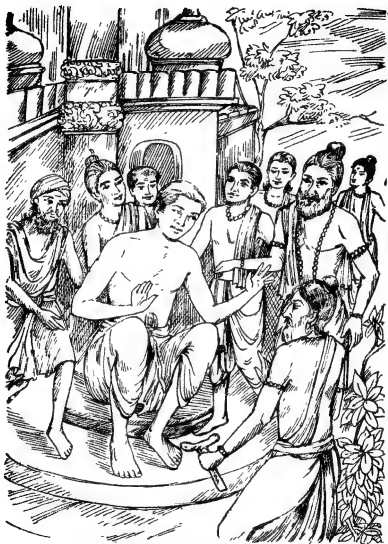
Kesava rubber his eyes and stood up. He looked around to see light but he was not sure if the sun was really up. He had a feeling that he did not sleep for long and it could not be morning so soon It must surely be another of the *yaksa's* tricks. But to be doubly sure he extended his gaze and saw darkness all around He had no doubt now that it was still the dead of night. So he said to the *yaksa*.

The sun is not yet up. It is all a trick by you. But I am strong in my vow and I cannot accept food before sun-rise."

The whole group headed by the *yaksa* was now prepared to coerce him. So he stood fast, with his eyes shut, as if in meditation. The noise gradually settled down, followed by a dead silence. When, at last, Kesava opened his eyes, he saw to his surprise that there was nothing—neither the the temple, nor the *yaksa* nor the devotees. Instead, there stood a divine person, who spoke in a solemn tone :

"Kesava ! You have passed through your test. You are fulfilling the vow with the same steadfastness with which you started it. So you deserve to be congratulated One day in the assembly of gods in heaven, when the king of gods was eloquently praising you for you steadfastness, all those present agreed with him, with the solitary exception in me. But, to-day, I am an eye-witness of your strength. The ordeal you underwent was all my creation, and I am sorry for the trouble caused to you I crave thy forgiveness and pray, you ask for a boon."

Kesava—"You bless me, sire, that I may continue to fulfil my vow till the end of my life. I am in no need of anything else."

Deva—"Still I want to bestow something on you, and you will do me the favour to ask for something."

"Friends ! I am under a vow... ....."

Kesava—"But, sire, you see, I hardly need anything. Contented am I."

Deva—"But I am keen to share in the virtue of thy steadfastness How do ye deprive me of that ?"

Kesava—"As it pleases you then, sire."

Deva—"So I give you the boon that the water which washes the first finger of your leg will heal any disease for good. When in difficulty, you will attain whatever you will crave for. Nothing is unattainable for the virtuous."

The *deva* then placed Kesava on the outskirts of a city and disappeared.

In the morning, Kesava entered into the city to find that a religious assembly was in progres Acharya Dharmashri was giving a discourse to the people assembled there. Kesava also sat down to listen.

The name of the city was Saketa Dhananjaya was the ruling king For quite sometime he was anxious to renounce the world and join the holy order, but he was prevented from doing so for want of a son and successor. The king was present in the religious assembly in which the Acharya was speaking. When the discourse was over, the king made the following submission :

"Holy sir ! I got indication last night in the course of a dream that in to-day's assembly, there will be present a young man who will assist me in my spiritual design and set me free from my present anxiety. It behoves thee to enlighten me how I dreamt such a dream and to indicate if such a person is present in the assembly." By dint of his superior knowledge, the Acharya realised the whole situation. Pointing to Kesava, he said,

"Here is your young man, named Kesava. The *deva* who tested Kesava's steadfastness also gave you the indication.

The king's joy know no bound. He at once came to Kesava, embraced him and took him to the palace. Kesava was enthroned as the king of Saketa. Dhananjaya joined the holy order.

One day, as Kesava was seated at the palace window, his eyes fell on an old man in the street who was in tattered clothes, and a very embodiment of poverty and distress. Kesava took no time to recognise him to be his father. He at once came down and touched his feet The old man was happy to see his son, the more so to see him to be a king. Seeing his father alone, Kesava enquired about his elder brother, when the old man sighed and said,

"It is a very sad story. The night you left I forced him to break the vow. He sat to dine with me. But it so happened that the food he took was contaminated with deadly poison which soon spread through his body. A healer was at once called in. He tried his best to save him but could not assure a permanent cure. He has farecast that he would not survive beyond a month, when his flesh would separate from the bones under the impact of the deadly poison. I stayed near him for five days. Then I started in search of you, and, luck favouring, I have so unexpectedly met you To-day I complete a month since I left home, and I know not if Hansa still lives in his mortal frame."

Kesava's fraternal affection was awaken. By the grace of the *deva*, he, along with his father, was beside his brother's bed in a moment. Hansa's body was emitting a foul smell and the flesh was all dilapidated. Kesava could no longer bear the sight. The *deva* at once reminded him of the healing powers he had endowed him with. The potion was made ready and sprinkled on Hansa's body. What a wonder, in no time, Hansa was all right.

It was really a day of great rejoicing and family reunion. The story of Kesava's magical power spread throughout the city and many came to receive cure for their ailments. Thereafter Kesava took his paternal family to his own city, Saketa. The king issued a special proclamation, which the people gladly courted :

"Desist from taking food at night."

CHARUDATTA

Sresthi Bhanu was a resident of the city of Champa. His wife's name was Subhadra. He had a son named Charudatta. Charudatta was so fond of reading from his infancy that he would care for nothing else. When he came of age, he was married to his cousin Mrigavati. But even this did not change his habit As Mrigavati lit the lamp in her bed-room, Charudatta would sit down with a book and spend the whole night on it He did not care for his wife's presence nor sought her company.

Merchant Bhanu and his wife were very much perturbed at the abnormal behaviour of the son They tried various remedies but without success Charudatta remained an inveterate book-worm and would care for nothing else in life. After much consideration, his father thought of engaging a public woman to change his son

It is always a bad thing to indulge in one bad habit to uproot another. This may rid you of one to make you a slave of another. But in his anxiety to cure his son of his reading habit. he never looked at this aspect. A well-known harlot, Vasantasena, was engaged for the purpose and very soon she was successful Now the young man was having a good time in her company. Thus twelve years rolled by. During these years, a vast sum of money flowed out from the merchant's coffer to reach the hands of the harlot. The merchant was now in severe financial strain. The continued absence of the son from home was an additional pain. But Charudatta would not care to look at his father's business, nor was he ready to give up the company of the woman. At last, the merchant and his wife died of a broken heart.

A harlot would care for a man only so long as he is a source of her earning, and she would throw him out as soon as he went dry. The relation between the two is not based on

' I shall lower you inside the well .

love, but on money, and so it does not take time to terminate. Charudatta was pennyless. So Vasantasena turned him out of her abode The young man returned home and saw it in a bad state. His parents were dead and the mansion was about to crumble down. Affluence was no longer there. It was all a reign of poverty in his one-time prosperous home This was a great shock for the young man. He sat down on the steps and bewailed for the great misfortune. When Mrigavati heard the sob, she came out, to see her own husband, and she took him in She consoled him with sweet words, made him take bath and served him food After he was somewhat consoled, she said.

"There is no use lamenting over what is past. I have some ornaments You may raise money against them and start some business The goddess of fortune smiles on one who is enterprising "

To this, Charudatta agreed He raised a small amount of money and started for another country in the company of his maternal uncle They bought some cotton, loaded it on a cart and turned their steps towards Tamralipti. In the way, the merchandise was lost in a fire They had no more money in the pocket. The uncle thought, 'Charudatta is very unfortunate If I go with him, I won't have a better turn in my fortune ' So he parted company with him and went on his own way.

Charudatta was now without a support Even his fortune would not stand by him Wandering alone, he reached the city of Priyangu There, a merchants, named Surendradatta, who happened to be his father's acquaintance, recognised him and took him to his house. There he stayed for some time.

One day, he found that some people of the city were preparing to go on a voyage. Charudatta also decided to go with them. Surendradatta discouraged him, but he would not listen.

The ship with Charudatta and others on board cast anchor at an island where all the merchants did their

business. Charudatta also did the same and earned a sizeable amount. He was now anxious to return home. So he started back with whatever money he had earned. Luck disfavoured him again The ship was caught in a storm on the sea and was lost. With it went down Charudatta's entire fortune. He saved himself with great difficulty by swimming ashore with the support of a floating plank. He now reached the outskirts of the city of Rajpur where he sat under a tree, taking stock of his life. A traveller was passing by that way. Charudatta saw his brilliant face and felt that this must be some uncommon personality. He folded his palms and wished him a good-day. The traveller stopped to look at him When he saw him in a pitiable condition, he said, "How do you look so sad and downcast, oh young man ?"

Charudatta narrated his story.

The traveller took pity on him and took him with himself. Charudatta apprehended no danger from him.

Danger, however, comes without giving notice, and it comes in a manner and at a time when it is least expected.

After they had covered some distance, the two reached a dense forest There was a hill in it and there was a cave in the hill The man opened the door of the cave and the two entered into it. As they proceeded inside the cave, they reached a well which was emitting very foul smell. The man handed over to Charudatta a hollow gourd and said,

"I shall lower you inside the well. You fill it up with the juice that is stored inside and pass it on to me. Then I shall take you out."

Then the man lowered Charudatta into the well. Now he was near the juice. As he extended his hand to fill up the gourd, he heard a voice from inside speaking something to him.

The voice—"Gentleman ; Take not the juice."

Charudatta—"Sir, Whoever you may be, I am to inform you that I am Bhanu Sresthi's son. At the bidding of a

fellow traveller, I have come down to take the juice from this well. You will excuse my disturbing you and be good enough to permit me to take a gourd-full of juice."

The voice—"I was a sea-roving merchant myself. Once I was a victim of a ship-wreck and saved myself by swimming ashore. Meseems that I met this same traveller who induced me to come with him. After we had reached here, he lowered me into this well Then he took the gourd full of juice from my hand but he dropped me into it Now, you see, sir, the same fate awaits thee Once in the well, it is impossible to get out This juice is dangerous to the body and my end now may not be very far off That's why I warned you not to touch it. You give me the gourd. I shall fill it and pass it on to you"

Charudatta gave him the gourd, which the man filled up and returned. The traveller now pulled up the rope

The traveller—"Give me the gourd first. Then I shall take you out"

Charudatta—"You have to take me out with the gourd"

The traveller was vexed at these words He took both of them out, but he pushed both back into the well. But as fortune helped him—and he was cautious too because of the prior warning—he caught the support of the earthen ring inside and stood half-way from the juice But, as there was no possibility of his getting out, he started brooding over his past As he did it, he felt very bad. But time is the best healer, and after some time, his agony had somewhat abated. It occured to him that it must be all a play of *karma* accumulated from the past, and it was not known what other hardships were still in store He went on brooding and brooding and at last thought of giving a turn to his life by changing its course in the spiritual direction He remembered the *arihantas*, the *siddhas*, the monks and the religion. He took the vow to desist from sinful acts, went on fast and became immersed in meditation.

The man who was already in the well said the following soothing words to console him :

"On the third day from to-day, a cow will come here to drink from this well. If, at that time, you can catch hold of her tail very fast, there may be an escape for you."

This gave a ray of hope to Charudatta, and he became more alert not to miss the chance.

After passing this piece of information, the man inside the well breathed his last.

On the third day, the said cow came there. Having drunk, as the cow was about to return, Charudatta caught hold of her tail and jumped out. He sat for a while to chant the holy *namokara* Then he left that place.

Hardly had he gone far when a wild buffalo chased him Charudatta ascended on a hill. The buffalo sat on the passage waiting for him. But good luck prevailing, a huge cobra came out of a cave in the hill and swallowed the buffalo. Charudatta now came down After he had crossed through the forest, he reached a village. There he met a friend of his father, Rudradatta, who himself was a merchant Charudatta stayed with him for some time

But Charudatta's luck was still in ferment and would not allow him to settle down. Now he and Rudradatta prepared a plan of going to the Land of Gold. No sooner was the plan ready than the two set out. They crossed a turbulent river and reached the region of Tonk. The way ahead was extremely dangerous for walking on foot. Besides, it did not give them speed. So they bought two big-sized he-goats and continued their journey on their back. But the Land of Gold was still very far. So Rudradatta said,

"If we proceed at this speed, we shall never reach our destination for a very long time. So we should devise some means of reaching there early."

Both started thinking. Soon, however, Rudradatta hit upon an idea. Said he,

"Well, I have an idea Let us kill our goats and use their hides to prepare two bags. Then we get inside each and lie on the ground. Some big-sized *bharunda* bird,

greedy of flesh, may pick up and drop us up in the Land of Gold. That will make our task very easy."

The plan did not, however, appeal much to Charudatta. So he said,

"We passed through the dense forest on the back of these goats. Should we now kill them ? Life is as much dear to them as to us. These animals too have a feeling of pain. So we should give up the idea of killing them"

Rudradatta—"Well, I do not understand your mind. These goats are neither our parents nor our brothers. In fact, they are none to us. They are meant for our use and we need give priority to our own requirements without brothering about what happens to them." Charudatta protested again, but Rudradatta said with a firmness .

"I am decided to kill my goat"

No sooner had he said it than he did it. Then he took out its hide.

Now, turning to Charudatta he said,

"You cannot do it. So let me do it for you."

On hearing this, Charudatta came to the goat and said,

"Poor animal ! In your previous birth, you must have killed some animal and so you are going to be slaughtered now. This is time for you now to renounce the *asravas* that tie the soul and take refuge unto the *arihantas* the *siddhas*, the monks and the religion. You seek forgiveness of all living beings, give up anger and cultivate a feeling of fraternity to all"

So saying he uttered the holy *namokara* into his ears.

Rudradatta killed the goat and used the two hides to prepare two leather bags. He entered into one of them and made Charudatta to enter into the other. Thus they lay on the ground taking their chance.

Now, everything went as expected (Two *bharunda* birds descended there and picked up the two goat skins in their

claws and flew away in the sky.) After they had covered some distance, they came across a few more birds of their own species. A quarrel ensued between them, in consequence of which the bags dropped down. Luckily, however, Charudatta's bag fell into a tank. So he remained unhurt. He now tore the bag and came out

When favourable *karma* is about to come up, it brings hope in the midst of darkness. Charudatta's unfavourable *karma* was in the exit phase now While wandering in the forest, he reached the top of a hill, where he saw a *muni*, who was exposing himself to the blazing sun, with his arms stretched upwards Charudatta sat down. Having finished his *kayotsarga*, the *muni* said,

"Who you are and why have you come here ? This is an island named Kumbhakunda and this hill is named Kakkoda. None can come here except the *devas*, the *vidyadharas* and the flying monks who are gifted with special powers There is a deep sea all around this island. How did you cross it ?"

Charudatta narrated his story On hearing his account, the *muni* said,

"In this mundane life, difficulties abound, not well-being. Not even the king of gods is capable of transgressing *karma* without experiencing its impact. It will be advisable for you to prevent the influx of fresh *karma* "

Just at that time, two persons descended there from an air-chariot. They were the monk's sons in the worldly life, both Vidyadharas, now residents of the Vaitadhya hills and both had come there to pay obeisance and homage to their father.

When Charudatta and these two were in the midst of a conversation, they saw another air-chariot rushing through the air. It was so bright that it gave light to all directions. The air-chariot descended on the hill and from it alighted a *deva*, attended by many others. To the surprise of all, he first paid obeisance and homage to Charudatta and then to the monk. Enlightening all, the in-coming *deva* said,

'This *sravaka* (pointing to Charudatta) is my spiritual master. It is because of his great favour that I have attained this divine status. To me, therefore, in matters of paying obeisance, he is Number One."

When the *Vidyadharas* asked how this came to be so, he said,

"In my previous birth, I was a goat and he was my master. Now, I was slaughtered by his companion But before he could kill me, this man did his best to help my spirit and chanted the holy *namokara* into my ears before I was slaughtered, by dint of which I enjoy this status to-day."

So saying, the *deva* paid him homage again and flew away The *Vidyadharas*, on their return flight, restored Charudatta to his city But before he departed, on the suggestion of the *muni*, Charudatta took the vow of imposing zonal restriction on his movement from the time he reached his home-city , for, he confessed that, for want of a vow like this he had suffered much in life

On the return flight, Charudatta spent a few days in the company of the *Vidyadharas* on the Vaitadhya hills and accepted the hand of a *Vidyadhara* damsel Then, back to his city, Charudatta, in the company of his two wives, spent the rest of his life happily and worthily, fulfilling the vow he had imposed on himself.

DHARMAKUMAR

In the land of Bharata in Jambudvipa, there was a city named Kamalapura There reigned a king named Sahasraksa. One day, as the king was seated in the court, there came an astrologer, who uttered benediction and resumed a seat The king said,

"Astrologer ! If it pleases you, do enlighten us about what is going to happen in the near future"

The astrologer remained silent When the king repeated his request again, he said,

"Your Majesty ! A severs famine is about to break out which is to last for about twelve years This will strain the administration and wipe out the people."

The king was very much perturbed. He said,

"We should take remedial measures from now."

He discussed the matter with his entire cabinet and arrived at the decision to empty the treasury to fill up the graneries. The work started at once. Many, who could afford, however, fled the country and moved elsewhere, some even across the sea.

It was the month of *asadha* (June-July). A patch of cloud was visible in the sky. The king was happy. 'This will give us the much-needed water', thought he. 'It is a very auspicious omen '

And so it was. The cloud soon spread all over the sky. It gave a good shower and the fields had enough water. There was a bumper crop. People were relieved. The famine had been averted and the astrologer proved untrue.

One day, the keeper of the king's parks came with the following message :

"Monk Yugandhar has camped for his monsoon stay in a park. He will remain without food for all these months. By dint of silence, meditation and *kayotsarga*, he has already acquired the *kevala jnana.*"

The king duly rewarded the keeper for this message and started with his people to welcome the monk and pay him obeisance and homage. After the king had met the monk and heard his holy words, he made the following submission:

"*Bhante* ! How did it so transpire that the astrologer's words proved untrue ?"

The monk—"Oh king ! The famine was really unavoidable due to the influence of the stars But the reason how it has been averted was not clear to the astrologer."

The king—"*Bhante* ! I am eager to know the reason, if possible."

The monk—"In this land of Bharata, there is a city named Purimatala. There lived a rich young man, who suddenly became ill due to the coming up of some inauspicious *karma*. No amount of substantial food intake would cure him and his ailment was everyday on the increase. One day, in the presence of his spiritual master, he gave up all rich food, sweets, milk products and resolved to live on a coarse diet and physical exercise to control the abdomen. He also courted a celibate life. Very soon, he recovered and was in the very best of health. This helped him even to take greater care of his business and add to his wealth. But he did not change the course of his life nor deviate from the vow about food and sex. Once, there was a severe famine in the land, and all his wealth was spent to help the people. Now, on completion of that life, he was born as a *deva*, and has now been reborn as the son of *sravaka* Subuddhi Because of the birth of this pious soul in your kingdom, oh king, even the inevitable has been averted."

The king took leave of the monk and proceeded straight to Subuddhi's house. He saw the child who was an embodiment of divinity. He blessed him from the core of his heart and named him Dharmakumar.

Dharmakumar grow up to be a worthy lad. He was married in a respectable family. He had a happy life, and in his old age, he joined the holy order of the monks. There he attained, in the end, *kevala jnana*.

SURASENA AND MAHASENA

In the city of Ksitipratisthita, there lived a king named Virasena. From his wife, Kamaladevi, he had two sons, Surasena and Mahasena. They were lucky and intimate and had a deep fraternal tie.

At times, even the happiest on the earth becomes the victim of pain and suffering Mahasena had a boil on his tongue. It grew in size and gave him no rest. Soon it became septic All attempts to cure him failed, and people could no longer bear the sight of his suffering The doctors at last declared it to be incurable.

The tongue was now rotten and emitted a foul smell. None could come near the prince, not even his own parents, the king and the queen The only person who did not give him up was his brother Surasena who always sat by his bed. One day he took the vow not to take food till his brother was cured.

It then occured to him :

"Why not I try the holy *namokara* "

So he brought some water in a cup, chanted the holy words into it and sprinkled it on the affected tongue What a wonder ! It gave immediate relief The holy water was sprinkled several times every day and in a few days, the prince was all right. The bad odour was gone and the tongue had regained its normal softness. That was a day of great glory to the religion. Once, after this incident, Acharya Bhadrabahu had come there, himself a master of *avadhi* knowledge. Surasena and Mahasena came to him to pay obeisance and homage. After the sermon was over, Surasona approached him with a request to be enlightened about the *karma* because of which his brother had suffered so much from the boil on the tongue.

The Acharya gave the following account :

"In the land of Bharata, there is a city named Manipur. There lived a warrior named Madan who was an ardent follower of the Jina path. He had two sons, Bhira and Vira. One day, on their way to the park, the two brothers came across a monk lying senseless on the public thoroughfare. On enquiry, they were told by the people that the monk was in *kayotsarga*, when he was bitten by a venomous snake. The snake had escaped into its hole.

On hearing this, Vira said,

'You were so many people here. Why didn't you kill the snake ?'

Bhira—'If the snake has escaped because of the support of his favourable *karma*, why do you yourself use such sinful expression about the slaughter of the snake ?'

Vira—'But don't you see, the snake has committed a crime in biting a monk. It deserved to be killed. I guess, that would have been an act of righteousness, not sin."

' Now, Surasena, "continued the monk," that Dhira is reborn in you, and Vira in your brother. As he had spoken sinful words about the killing of the snake on that occasion, and did not rightly withdraw them, he suffered from the boil on the tongue. You yourself cured him with the help of the holy *namokara*."

The account was over. It awakend the memory of previous birth in the two brothers. They now resolved to cut the tie of mundane life, and so they did, to join the order of monks and make a full use of their human birth.

KESARI

In the land of Bharata, there was a city named Kamarupa, where ruled King Vijayachandra. In the same city, there lived a rich merchant named Sanghadatta, who had a son named Kesari The merchant was famous for his honesty and munificence, but the son was the reverse of it He had developed into a notorious thief. The merchant tried his best to improve his son, but it was all an useless effort. Then, at last, he brought the matter to the notice of the king:

"Your Majesty ! I have nothing to do with this boy I have tried my best to improve him, but he is incorrigible. If, in future, he commits a theft, I suggest, let the law take its own course"

The king sent for the boy and asked him to get out of his kingdom at once. He told him that he would kill him if he saw his face again

Kesari left the kingdom While wandering through a forest, he reached a tank and drank water from it Then, as he was seated in a corner, taking stock of his situation, he saw a man descending from the sky. He further saw that the man had a pair of magic sandals which helped him to fly and he hid these in a part of the forest and entered into the tank.

Kesari now silently stood up, picked up the sandals and flew away into the sky. He spent the whole day flying, reaching home after sun-set. Here his first task was to chastise his father who had reported against him to the king. He bit him so severely that the poor man died.

Already a veteran thief, Kesari had now the equippage of the pair of sandals which could take him anywhere he liked. So now he could extend his activities over wider regions and there was hardly a rich man in the lands

far and near who was not a victim He would commit theft at night and come to the aforesaid forest to hide his booty.

He soon became a source of great terror to everybody. The leading citizens came to the king who, in turn, sent for the head of the police. The police chief made the following submission :

"Your Majesty ! This thief is somewhat different from the usual ones. He comes through the sky and goes back through the sky, and so he is beyond anybody's catch. Your Majesty may be gracious enough to determine my duty in this situation,"

The king sat silent immersed in thought. At last said he,

"A king who cannot catch a thief and ensure the safety of life and property to his people is a bad king. I must see what I can do in this matter."

Then attended by a few competent men, the king set out himself.

The party searched every corner of the kingdom, but could find no trace of the thief. One day, after the search, the king was taking rest under the shade of a tree when he smelt a fine fragrance that came floating in the air. He stood up, and then moving in the direction from which the fragrance came, the king at last reached a temple dedicated to Goddess Chandika. When he entered inside, he saw that the idol was adorned with fragrant objects like sandal wood, deer-musk, etc , and there stood a devotee offering worship. On being asked by the king, he gave the following account of himself.

"I am the son of a merchant but am very poor and miserable I worship this goddess everyday in the expectation of wealth and happiness The goddess is well-pleased with my devotion. When in the morning I come here, I find lying at her feet precious stones and gems. This has turned my fortune and so I worship the goddess with fragrant objects every day."

The king was now almost sure about the presence of the thief in that temple every night. He returned to the forest and waited there till evening. At night, he moved

With the sandals in his left hand, he entered into the templ

to the temple precincts along with his men and hid there waiting for the thief. At the dead of night, Kesari came through the sky and descended there. With the sandals in his left hand, he entered into the temple. The king silently shut the door from behind.

Having finished his worship, as Kesari came to the door, he was chased by the king. Quickly, he placed the sandals on the floor, but had no time to wear them. So he left them behind, opened the door and run out at top speed. The king's men followed him.

As Kesari was running, there came a sudden change in him. He was now thinking of his bad deeds and accumulated sins

A timely reaction may even change the cruelest of men and build a bright future for him. As Kesari penetrated into the deepest part of the forest, he came across a monk immersed in meditation. He stopped there and thought of desisting himself from malice and greed. He thought of the transitoriness of life, of its sure end. Soon his evil *karma* moved out and he became enlightened. This metamorphosis took no time to work out and was complete by the time the king entered into the arena to arrest him. The king now could not lay his hand on him ; instead, he bowed at his feet and said,

"My dear friend ! How is it that the thief Kesari is changed into Kesari the enlightened ?"

So said Kesari :

"Sire ! It is true that my whole life is a long story of misdeeds ; but in the midst of them, I never forgot to sit for one *samayika* per day. That is why the bondage of *karma* could not ensnare me very fast Know it for certain, oh king, that as much *karma* is tranquilised by a short equanimity as by a long drawn penance That is the charm of equanimity. It is this short course that has helped me in my enlightement.

The king came back to his city, while Kesari courted the life of a wanderer indicating the path of liberation to the worldly beings.

SUMITRA

King Tarapida of the city of Srichandra had a minister named Sumitra, who was a devoted *sravaka* and regularly performed the *samayika, pratikramana* and other religious rites. These were very much disliked by the king who said one day ;

"Sumitra, why have you unnecessarily loaded yourself with these worthless activities ? You are emaciating your body with penances, but what is the outcome of this all ? Give up these oddities and have a pleasant life "

"Your Majesty ! You should extend your co-operation to my spiritual activities. But instead of doing that, you are only discouraging me This is somewhat unbecoming of you. You should know that good deeds alone help men in attaining true well-being "

"Sumitra ! If you can demonstrate the instantaneous outcome of religion, then I may agree with you ; but not otherwise."

"Sire ! The very fact that you are a king, the master of so much wealth, and responsible for the well-being of so many people, is the greatest proof of the practical utility of religion What other proof can excel this ?"

"Well take an example There is a slab of stone. It is cut into two pieces One is used for the construction of a staircase and the other is curved into an image. Will you say that one-half of the stone had accumulation of sins while the other half was all merit and piety ? Likewise, you take it from me, some one is a king, some one a minister and some one a mere attendant "

"Sire ! There is no comparison between life and a slab of stone. The slab may be broken into many pieces, but not the soul of a living being. Each soul has a

distinctiveness and existence of its own, each one has separate *karma* and each one is a separate prey to their outcome.'

"Still I don't agree till I am an eye-witness of its practical usefulness."

This sort of debate often took place between the king and the minister, but none would yield

It so happened one day that the minister, having finished his duties at the court, returned to his residence after dusk. That being a *chaturdasi* (fourteenth) day of the fortnight, he was on fast. But as he could not come in time to perform the *pausadha*, by way of atonement, he imposed on himself the vow of not to move out from his house during the night till sun-rise and sat down in *pratikramana*.

At night, there came a messenger from the king with an urgent call for the minister, but the minister, communicated back his inability to comply with the king's request till day-break. The king was aflame at this insubordination on the part of the minister and sent the messenger again with a stricter order for the minister either to turn up at once to attend urgent business of the state or resign his office and surrender the seal thereof.

This was a test for Sumitra. Thought he,

'To transgress the vow is a great sin. I am at this moment a minister, and even if the position goes, I may get similar position again. A position is insignificant when compared with a vow. So it is not worthwhile to give up the vow as desired by the king and save the position.'

So thinking he did not comply with the king's order. The messenger started back to apprise the king of the minister's stand.

On the way back, the messenger was thinking. 'If I were the minister .....' and then he did not know when he started saying :

"I am the minister, I am the minister......"

No sooner had these words been uttered than there was an uproar :

"Strike him, kill him."

And in the twinkling of an eye, a few armed men jumped on the messenger and made him lie flat on the ground. They snatched from him the minister's resignation and seal of office.

When the news of the messenger's death reached the king, he started at once with an unsheathed sword in his hand. He was under the impression that Sumitra had a hand in the murder. On the highway, he met these armed men surrounding the deadbody of the messenger. The king stopped and said,

"Who are you ? Why did you kill my man ?"

"We have come from Dharavas where reigns King Surasena Our purpose was to murder the minister, Sumitra, who extorts at exorbitant subsidy from our king. As we reached here, this man was shouting 'I am the minister', and so our wrath fell on him But now we find that he was not the minister, and so our exertion has been in vain"

The king now chased them all with his naked sword and brought them down dead Thought he,

'It is good that Sumitra did not come. His vow has the saved him Otherwise, he would have fallen a victim to swords of these men This must be the outcome of religion, and, I feel, it has some practical utility.'

Instead of returning to the palace, the king proceeded straight to the house of the deposed minister, to whom he said,

"Sumitra, today I am an eye-witness of the practical utility of religion. Had you not been under the vow, you would have been butchered And that would have been the greatest tragedy for the kingdom. I am very sorry that I removed you from office. But I reinstate you."

This was a proper occasion for Sumitra to convert the king to the path of religion and he said many wise things to him Once the king met Acharya Purnachandra, when he accepted the vows of a *sravaka*. This also had its impact on the deliberations at the court which now changed virtually into a spiritual assembly. On the advice of the minister Sumitra, the king now did many things for the good of his people.

RANASURA

King Ranasura of Kanchanpura was so very licentious that he spent much of his time in the company of his consort Srikanta, and never cared for any spiritual activity. One day, as he was seated in the court, an unknown person came there and said in a challenging tone :

"Oh king ! It is not a good thing to remain immersed all the time in objects of pleasure and enjoyment Total indifference to religion is another name for a total indifference to spirit. One should keep in view the fact that life is short and death is inevitable If you think that you can do anything you please with your earthly power, then you are mistaken. I challing you and you can test it against me."

This was too much for the king to bear in silence. He ordered his men to pursue him and kill him. All of them reached an open field where the encounter took place, but what to speak of being a match for him, none of the king's men did dare to come near him. Single-handed, he defeated them all, and put them to their heels. The man then returned to the court, held the king by his hairs and removed him to a far-off jungle.

The king was now all alone in the jungle, far, far away from his city, and more than that, from Sukanta, whose separation he could not bear even for a moment. He felt so helpless. Just at that moment, he saw a monk in meditation, and sat down near him. When the meditation was over and the monk opened his eyes, he saw the king. At once, these puzzling words came out from the monk's mouth :

"Hellow ! Haven't you got your solution yet ?"

The king could not catch his meaning, and said almost mechanically,

"Be kind to me, sire."

The monk then gave him some good counsel, after which the king said,

"Oh monk ! You are beautiful and young. Instead of enjoying the pleasures of the world, why did you renounce them so early ?"

"Oh king ! The thought of oldage and of death inspires and induces one to court renunciation. But when you actually renounce depends on when the thought comes up to you, and it does not come up to all persons at the same age. These are the two eventualities, oldage and death, that expose life in its naked form. I was a king myself, but, you see, the thought of these two came pretty early to me, and so I renounced the world in the very prime of my youth Now in the order of the monks, freed from the terror of oldage and death, I roam about in the most natural pleasantness of life."

The king was convined that this was no ordinary person So he asked him about the cause of his present misfortune :

"Holy sire ! Only recently, one day, as I was seated in my court chamber, a powerful man picked me up and discarded me in this wilderness Could you be kind enough to enlighten me as to who he was and why did he behave so curiously towards me."

The monk gave the following account to the king :

"There is a god named Amritpriya, a resident of heaven, who called on me only a few days back, and enquired who would be his successor in his heavenly abode after he would vacate from there When I revealed your name, he reacted at once, saying that you were licentious, excessively fond of Srikanta, that you never indulged in spiritual activity, and that, therefore, he did neither approve nor relish the idea of your succeeding him in heaven. I told him that you would be brought here by him, that you would thereafter take the path of religion, be enlightened, acquire sufficient pious *karma* to be entitled to a heavenly abode. It is for this reason, oh king, you have been brought here by the said god."

This opened the eyes of the king and right there, he accepted the vows of a *sravaka*. Even the god appeared there and congratulated the king for the great change. Then he restored him to his city and departed

At times, an unexpected event gives a major turn to life and simultaneously acts as an ordeal. Such a thing was to happen to the king. One day, as the king came to the harem, he did not see Srikanta there. He waited for some time but she did not come. The king became restless, and ordered a search of the whole palace, but she was nowhere. In extreme anxiety, the king sent for an astrologer who advised him to proceed in the northern direction and assured him that he would find her there. The king started at once and proceeded for five days without any stop. At last, he reached a jungle, where he saw a temple dedicated to a *yaksa*. The king halted there to rest. As it happened to be *chaturdasi* (14th day), he sat down with a triple vow of silence, meditation and *pausadha*.

The resident *yaksa* named Dhananjaya wanted to test the king's devotion and steadfastness. So he ordered an attendant to go at once to the king with the message that his consort, Srikanta, was being carried away by that way by a miscreant.

The king heard the message but did not respond, nor did he seek the miscreant with a view to recover Srikanta. To break the vow would be, thought he, like taking content out of life, and in that case, what would remain of life and what of the woman he loved so infatuously ! So he let the event take its own course during the duration of the vow. But even in his meditation, the king could feel some miscreant carrying Srikanta away and hear her bewail as follows :

"My Lord ! Save me. This wretch has stolen me away from the palace. He is now carrying me away to fulfil his evil design. I know not what he will do to me. I am so helpless. I am undone. My dear, you love me so much and you have come all the way here in search of me. It is a happy coincident that this wretch has brought me here. Rescue me at once from his hands."

But the king did not move and kept full control on his mind, not allowing it to be disturbed in any way by the events outside. Failing in this plot, the *yaksa* then contrived a shower of dust on the king This was followed by the appearance of a snake, a scorpion, and poisonous ants one after the other. They even stung the king Then came ferocious animals. But the king remained firm in his triple vow The *yaksa* now admitted defeat and admired the king's steadfastness

After the vow was completed, the *yaksa* made the following confession :

"Worthy sire ! There is no Srikanta here She has been carried away by a *Vidyadhara* of the city of Gaganaballava in the southern range of the Vaitadhya hills As the *Vidyadhara* was about to transgress the limit of decency towards her, she took the extreme course of beating him with a club, which she continued till the poor fellow died. Her puriety thus stands unstained which I happily confirm"

So saying, the *yaksa* arranged to procure her from the Vaitadhya hills and restore her to the king

In the company of his consort, the king now returned to his city Ever since he had met the monk, he took the vow to practise *pansadha* on each relious occasion, and this he continued to fulfil throughout his life This earned for him a worthy life on earth, and thereafter a place in heaven

JINADATTA

In the city of Pottanapura, there lived a wealthy merchant named Jinadatta whose wife's name was Purna. He was not merely a follower of the Jina path but also a great doner and considered any chance to make charity as an omen of good luck. One day, an *acharya* had come to the city, when Jinadatta visited him in the company of other fellow citizens and accepted the vow to fast every alternate day and say *pratikramana* twice daily,

The goddess of fortune is the most fickle and least dependable, and no one can be sure as to when she comes in and when she moves out. Jinadatta was a man of wealth and affluence, but with a turn in his fortune, he became poor and could not have even the barest of subsistence. One day his wife suggested that it might be worthwhile to go to her parents, borrow some money and start business afresh. The idea did not appeal much to Jinadatta, but as his wife was insistent, very reluctantly he agreed and started on a fine day Purna gave him a packet of fried chick-pea powder for his meal on the way.

The trip did not disturb the merchant's vow to fast every alternate day. The day he started was for him a day of fasting. On the second day, at noon, he sat down on the bank of a tank and diluted some chick-pea powder in a cup of water Then washing himself he sat down to break his fast. Thought he, "When at home, I take my meal only after giving a portion of it to some pious seeker But where do I get a seeker here ?" Luckily, however, his thought-process worked, and he saw a monk coming in that direction. The monk's body was very lean and emaciated because of the frequent practice of month-long fasts, and even on that day the monk had come to seek food after one such fast Jinadatta bowed before him and prayed that the monk might partake a portion of his meal. The prayer was accepted.

On the fourth day, Jinadatta reached his father-in-law's house. After the usual reception and meal, he apprised his father-in-law with the purpose of this unusual visit. It is a great irony of life that prosperity makes a friend of everybody, but not so adversity, which is a real testing time, when one may distinguish a friend from an indifferent onlooker. The father-in-law held consultation with the members of his family, even the family diety and regretted inability to extend any financial help

Extremely disappointed, Jinadatta turned his steps homeward. Nearing his own city, he started to guess the reaction of his wife when she would hear of her father's refusal. He felt somewhat mortified and ashamed. But to avert the first shock of their meeting. he picked up a bag-full of pebbles from the bank of the river, placed the bag on his head, and returned home.

Purna eagerly received the bag from her husband and rushed to her bed-chamber to see what it contained. And what a surprise, it was all full of precious stones and games.

'How very considerate my father must have been', thought she. He must have taken pity on our present situation and given these all'.

Then she took one precious stone, and went to a grocer's shop to mortgages it and bring some provisions. She cooked various delicacies and served them on the table.

Jinadatta was taken aback to see so many cooked items served on the table Said he,

"My dear ! We are already in heavy debt. Why did you borrow again to prepare so many delicacies for me ?"

Purna smiled and said,

"Why, I borrowed nothing. My father has given you so many precious stones and gems and I have sold but one out of them to get necessary provisions."

This was a real surprise for Jinadatta who had actually

. . . it was all full of precious stones and gems.

brought nothing from his father-in-law. So he rushed to the bed-room, and to his surprise he saw that the pebbles he had collected and brought home had all turned into precious stones. Then he turned to his wife and said,

"My dear, the gems you see haven't come from your father's home ; a gift of chick-pea to a monk has turned pebbles into precious stones."

Eventually, the stones were sold in the market and this brought the couple a large fortune. They were wealthy once again This event gave a great fillip to their faith in the efficacy of gifts and charities, and henceforth these become a unforgetable part of their daily life.

RATNASAR

In the city of Ratnavisala, where reigned King Samar Singha, there lived a merchant named Vasusar. He had a son named Ratnasar. One day, Ratnasar went to his garden-house in the company of his peers when his eyes fell on Acharya Vinayandhara who had come there. He went near the Acharya, bowed thrice and raised the following question :

"Holy sire ! What helps the acquisition of happiness ?"

The Acharya said,

"As a key to happiness, contentment may be deemed to be unsurpassed. In the absence of contentment, not even the king of gods or a universal monarch can be happy ; but with contentment, even one sleeping on the bare earth and living on coarse diet may be happy. Contentment may be of two types—full and qualified. A homeless monk has full contentment, but a house-holder's contentment is qualified. (To have it), every house-holder should limit his acquisition."

These words very much inspired Ratnasār who accepted the vows of a *sravaka*, particularly the vows of equanimity and of limiting acquisition.

One day, Ratnasar came across a Kinnara who had the body of a human being but the face of a horse. Ratnasar could not check a smile at his queer shape, and he spoke the following words almost without effort :

"If this be a human being, why does it have the appearance of a horse. Surely, he is neither a human being nor a celestial being, but an animal from another land or an animal-vehicle for some god."

At these words, the Kinnara felt slighted and said,

"Ratnasar ! You look on me with utter contempt only because of your ignorance. I am a Vyantara (sylvan) god with freedom to behave and freedom to enjoy. In my view, you are a real animal who are grossly deceived by your own father."

Ratnasar was taken aback. Said he,

"What do you mean when you say that I have been grossly deceived by my own father ?"

"I mean what I say You have been deceived. Had it not been so, you would have been in the know of special things in your household Your father has kept out certain things from the purview of your knowledge."

"But your allegation is vague. To substantiate, you should be specific at least about some items, and indicate how they have been kept out of my knowledge."

"Your father has a special steed of black hue, lean but very fast, who has been imported from another land. It has a broad neck, flies with the air and gives sure success to its master. Its normal speed is 100 *yojanas* per day and it can encircle the earth in seven days The steed is kept hidden from you. I shall deem you to be a true hero only when you can take possession of it "

So saying the Kinnara disappeared in the sky. Ratnasar returned home with the only thought, how to get the steed. He entered into a discarded room and lay on an worn-out cot. When the news reached his father, he came running and, on knowing the problem of his son, he said,

"I had really no intention to hide anything from you. But, you see, I cannot tolerate your absence from home. If you had known the existence of the steed, it is pretty sure that it would have been difficult for me to detain you at home. I deliberately kept it a secret only to avert this situation But now that you have known about it, I shall pass it on to you and give you the liberty to do what pleases you."

Ratnasar's problem was so easily solved. He was happy

now. He took no time to ride on its back and move out of the city. Once beyond the bound of the city, he put the steed to gallop. Vasusar had a trained parrot. Knowing that his master's son had moved out, it expressed a desire to accompany him as an escort. Vasusar readily agreed. The parrot now flew out of the cage and overtook Ratnasar who received it cordially and placed it on the steed."

As the steed was flying over a dense forest, Ratnasar's eyes fell on a hermit youth who was extremely charming. The youth also saw him and was charmed at his manly grace. The existence of a human being in such a dense forest so much delighted Ratnasar that he could not check the temptation to come down and meet him. The hermit youth advanced to receive him The youth made enquires about his name, his parents, his family, his line, his caste, his city and his country, and the purpose of his visit there. He also invited him to be his guest

As Ratnasar alighted from the steed and was about to satisfy the curiosity of the youth, the parrot spoke out,

"How do you feel interested about these details ? We haven't come here to settle a marriage in your family. We are strangers and, at the moment, your guests. That should be enough for you." The hermit youth took no offence at the parrot's words but was delighted at the parrot's intelligence. Then turning to Ratnasar, he said,

"Sir, you are lucky to have a sincere friend in this parrot. I request you both to accept my hospitality. I am a hermit and so I may not be able to provide you with all comforts, but I shall do my best to help you."

Then the youth led them to another part of the forest where there was a tank. Ratnasar took his bath and became fresh. Then fruits were served for his lunch The parrot and the horse were duly fed.

After the lunch, all of them sat down to rest and chat. Getting a hint from his master, the parrot said,

"Young man ! You are in the very prime of youth, and it should be a surprise that you have courted renunciation.

Despite your very delicate frame, you have preferred to choose a hard life. But it seems to me that, like the *malati* flower, you have dedicated your life to a colossal waste. How very nice you would look in silk and nylon; instead, you have put on a bark. Your hairs need a delicate touch; instead, they are all matted. I do not know what induced you to this wrong choice."

The hermit youth was abashed. With tears of joy in his eyes, and throat almost choked, he said,

"Your endearing words give me a great joy. Both of you are inquisitive about my choice, and this gives me added joy. Surely shall I narrate the story of my life to such friends as you both."

Ratnasar and the parrot now sat all attention and the hermit youth was just about to start his account, when there started a severe cyclone darkening all directions with flying dust. There was a terrific roar in the wind, so that nothing was visible and nothing was audible. The hermit youth was unfortunately caught in the wind which lifted him up to the sky. He cried for assistance, but before Ratnasar could do anything, he was carried far, far away.

Ratnasar became very sad at this event To change his thought, the parrot said,

"This hermit youth does not seem to be a boy He must be a girl, who has been turned into a boy by the machination of some cruel god, demon or *Vidyadhara* His face-cut and gait lend support to my guess. If somehow she could be rescued from her present state, I have no doubt, she would be glad to marry you." They were now searching for the youth, but the search did not yield any result. One day, they reached a temple dedicated to the first Tirthankara Risabha Ratnasar worshipped at the feet of the image and sat down at the window to rest and enjoy the forest-scape outside. Addressing the parrot, he said,

"So many days have passed, and we have not been able to trace the hermit. It causes me much pain."

"Regret not, sir. There will be the happy reunion this very day."

Just then a lady stepped inside the temple. She worshipped and danced before the image. Ratnasar saw all this from the window. Slowly he came down to her, bowed before her and enquired who she was and how she came to that dense forest and for what purpose. The lady gave the following account :

"There is a city named Kanakpura where reigns King Kanakadhwaja. His wife Kusumshri dreamt one night that two garlands came flying to her. In the morning, when she told the king about the dream, he said,

'It appears that twin girls will be born to you.'

"In course of time, the queen gave birth to two daughters, who were named Asokamanjari and Tilakamanjari. When they stepped into their youth, the king thought of settling them in marriage, preferably with one groom.

"It was now spring, and both the sisters went to the royal garden to enjoy a swing Asokamanjari sat on it and Tilakamanjari pushed from behind. Just then a *Vidyadhara* was flying over the garden. When he saw Asokamanjari on the swing, he picked her up from there and disappeared in the sky. When Tilakamanjari saw this, she fell down senseless on the ground.

"When the sad news reached the palace, the king, the queen and members of the royal hourehold, leading citizens, all came to the park. But there was nothing to be done and so all returned very sad at the episode.

"Tilakamanjari was now at the palace. It was the last quarter of the night when she got up and came to the temple of Goddess Chakreswari to propitiate her for the recovery of her dear sister. The goddess was well pleased at her devotion, and assured her that in a month's time she would not only know the where-about of her sister, but also meet her. When Tilakamanjari enquired of the goddess when and where she would meet her, the goddess told her that she would meet her in a temple dedicated to the first *tirthan-*

kara in a dense forest in the western direction from the city. The goddess further advised her to worship the *tirthankara* everyday and offered her the assistance of a divine peacock to carry her there. I am that Tilakamanjari, sir, and you understand now the purpose of my presence here."

Just at that moment a peacock came down. While taking leave of the stranger, the princess said,

"This peacock is my vahicle, and I come here everyday on his back. Today I complete a month of my worship, but I do not see any trace of my sister anywhere Sir, you are moving through many lands. If, by chance, you come across a lady bearing similarity with me, be kind enough to pass the information on to me."

"Charming lady ! Surely shall I oblige you if I see one like you. So far in my wandering I did not come across any such lady but I met a hermit youth in a forest."

"To-day you will surely meet your sister," said the parrot,

"In that case, I shall remain ever grateful to you."

When the three were in the midst of conversation, a terrified goose fell from the sky and sat on Ratnasar's lap saying, "Oh brave man ! I seek refuge with thee. I am wretched and helpless, and there is none to save me. Please save my life." Ratnasar took the goose under his protection and uttered words of consolation. He offered it cool water to drink. After the goose was somewhat pacified, Ratnasar asked who it was, wherefrom did it come, how it could speak in human voice, and of whom it was so much afraid. He assured that he would try to mend the situation and allay the fear if it was within his power in any way. As the goose was about to recount its story, however, a noise became audible outside and soon there appeared some soldiers outside the temple. The parrot now came near the temple door and said to the soldiers in an angry voice,

"Men ! Haven't you reached a wrong place ? Don't you know that Prince Ratnasar is taking rest here ? Aren't you familiar with his prowess, which neither gods, nor demons

nor *Vidyadharas* can excel. If by any chance his angry glance falls on you, you can nowhere escape for the safety of your life."

This created a terror in their mind. They talked amongst themselves,

"Surely this must be a god or a demon; otherwise, he would not have challenged us, the *Vidyadharas*. If, as we see, the prince's parrot is so very sharp, how much more powerful the prince himself must be! It may become difficult for us to stand before him. It is, therefore, not wise to accept the challenge of one whose strength we don't know."

So the soldiers returned to their chief to report, who, on hearing the account, lost his temper and said,

"Fie on ye all, cowards, that ye are so much afraid of an insignificant parrot. I used to take pride in your valour, but I see now that it was all placed in very unworthy persons. I know not who this prince may be, but you at least should have known that none among the gods or the demons is capable of standing before my prowess. Fools ye are all, wholly unworthy for the profession of arms."

So saying, he mobilied his power to the full, with ten heads and four hands, and equipped himself with deadly arms. Then with a terrific roar that would put even a lion to shame, he descended and entered into the temple precincts. The parrot saw him and came back to Ratnasar in terror. Now, throwing the challenge, the *Vidyadhara* said,

"Ye wretched man! Get away at once, or ye force me to kill thee. Ye have kept hidden my dear goose. If life be dear to thee, then surrender her at once."

The parrot, the lady, the peacock and the goose were all trembling. Only Ratnasar did not lose nerves. Firmly he said,

"Ye fool! I am not afraid of thee, nor am I going to surrender the goose unto thee. Get out of my sight at once, or I shall cut off your ten heads and make gift of them to the ten directions."

There was a severe fighting in which Ratnasar fought

against the *Vidyadhara* and his soldiers from horse-back. One by one, the soldiers fled, and soon there was none barring the chief. There was now a straight fight in which the *Vidyadhara* invoked his magical powers and hurled them at his human adversary. Ratnasar met them all. At last, he threw an arrow which pierced the *Vidyadhara* in the chest and he fell down in a swoon. Regaining sense, he entered the arena again, this time more dreadful than on the previous occasion. Finding Ratnasar in danger, the divine peacock assumed his original form of a god, picked up a heavy mace and struck the *Vidyadhara* on the head. This ended all his magical powers and he stood helpless acknowledging defeat.

Ratnasar now came inside the temple in the company of the god (former peacock). Tilakamanjari who had witnessed the fight from the temple had no doubt that the man must be a rare hero. He was beautiful too and she felt, she would be happy to be his bride Besides, this would help her in the search for her sister, which was only possible by courage and intellect, which Ratnasar possessed.

Ratnasar now picked up the goose and placed her on his palm to help her to tender her account, which she did as follows :

"Madan is the *Vidyadhara* chief at Rathanpur on the Vaitadhya hills and his wife is Kamala. One day, the chief was flying over a garden at Kanakpur when princess Asokamanjari was enjoying a ride on the swing. The chief was charmed at her beauty and picked her up from there. When Asokamanjari started bewailing, he said to her,

"Oh lady ! Don't be afraid. I am not a rogue, nor a thief, but the master of a kingdom. You will have no trouble with me. Rather, you will always find me obliging and ready to serve you in all manners. Among all my consorts, you will be the foremost "

"Asokamanjari was very much annoyed at his misbehaviour in picking her up, but she preferred to keep silent. Madan took it to be the outcome of the sudden separation from her near and dear ones and felt that she would be all

There was a severe fighting in which Ratnasar fought from horse back

right after some time. To give her respite to convalesce, he turned her into a hermit youth and placed her in a forest. There he visited her every day to win her favour, but was no more successful than he was on the first occasion. Sir, it was this hermit youth whom you yourself met. If you still remember, as on your request, the youth was about to tender his account upto you, there was a cyclone which was a creation by the *Vidyadhara*, who picked the youth up and took him to his own city. There he again repeated his overtures, but with no better result. Then he unsheathed his sword to kill her but Asokamanjari did not yield. Said she,

"Swords may be helpful to win kingdoms, but not a woman's heart, which can be won by love and affection only. By sticking to your haughtiness, you demonstrate how unworthy you are to seek my heart."

"Madan was fully aflame with rage. 'You foolish girl! You decry me like that in my very presence! I must put an end to your life,' he shouted.

"Asokamanjari was not terrified at his words." She said,

'When I am decided not to court thee, what's the point in my staying with thee like this? It is better that you kill me at once. I am no seeker of my life from thy hands.'

"At this, Madan softened. He even changed his mind. Then he turned Asokamanjari into a goose and put her in a cage. When his wife, Kamala, saw the goose, she had some suspicion. One day, she induced the goose to give her full account, which she did. Now, you know, a lady cannot bear the presence of a co-wife So one day Kamala took her chance and opened the cage. The goose escaped and was on her wings floating through the air When at last she became tired, she came down to the ground to sit on your lap. Here am I, Sir! When the *Vidyadhara* came to know of my escape, he pursued me. The rest of the story is too well-known to everyone present here."

When the account was complete, Tilakamanjari could no longer restrain herself. She said,

"Sister dear! How did you live in the dense forest as a

hermit youth ? How do you live now in the shape of a bird ? I know not what *karma* may have put you to so much suffering. How will you get rid of this animal body ?"

The god stood near at hand. He changed the goose into her human form. It became a very happy occasion, an occasion of reunion of two dear sisters.

Jokingly, Ratnasar said to Tilakamanjari,

"The credit for this reunion should in part go to me. I must have my due price."

"Sir, even if we give our all to you for all that you have done, that will be too inadequate a price."

So saying Tilakamanjari took out a precious necklace from her neck and placed it on Ratnasar. He was not willing to accept it ; but Tilakamanjari was insistent and he could not disoblige her.

Tilakamanjari also honoured the parrot suitably.

The god then turned to Ratnasar and said,

"These two worthy ladies have already been allotted to thee by Goddess Chakreswari. I am only to fulfil the ritual aspect now. I offer the hands of both the sisters unto thee and it behoves thee to signify thy acceptance."

Ratnasar could not decline such an offer. He gladly signified his assent.

It is a significant irony of life that it never moves in a straight line. At a moment when one feels he is in full possession of earthly pleasures, pains almost unknowingly creep in. One night, as Ratnasar was lying on his couch, he saw a terrible-looking man rushing towards him with blood-shot eyes and challenging him to a duel. As he got ready to meet him, the man picked up the cage with the parrot and fled. Ratnasar pursued him upto a very long distance but could see him no more. He had now no doubt that his adversary was either a god, a demon or a *Vidyadhara* who had put him to an irreparable loss by taking away the parrot.

But he did not turn his steps, and was decided not to

do so till the recovery of the parrot. Throughout the day, he continued his search, and reached a city in the evening. As he was about to enter the city, he was prevented from doing so by a parrot, who said that it did so for his own good. This made Ratnasar very inquisitive, and as there was no prohibition or taboo on the account being given, the parrot gave the following account :

"Here, in this city, there reigned a king named Purandara, under whose administration, people were happy, except for one thing, which made their life miserable. This was the depredation by a thief who regularly visited the city at night. He turned many rich men into paupers. Efforts were made to catch him but without success. One day, the king himself headed the hunt and pursued the thief as he was escaping with a bundle of treasures. When the thief saw that he could not escape, he slipped into a nearby monastery. Inside, there lay a monk who was fast asleep. He dropped the bundle near him and, empty-handed, he escaped without generating any suspicion. When the king reached the monastery, he found the monk with the stolen treasures and arrested him. The monk was tried and ordered for execution. After he was executed, he became a *yaksa*. To take revenge, he not only killed the king, but turned the whole city into a desert, and he still haunts it. It is for this, sir, I prevented you from entering into the city.

A greatful Ratnasar said,

"Dear bird ! Thank you for the information. But you take it from me that I am not afraid of the devil and he can do me no harm. Rather, you will see, I shall bend him before me."

So saying, he entered into the city. He freely moved through it, and was charmed at its wealth and affluence, piles of grains and the palace, and he passed through all the chambers of the palace. At the seventh floor, he saw a fine couch, and, tired as he was, he lay on it and was soon asleep.

The *yaksa* returned at night and became furious to find a man lying on his couch. He was surprised too. Diverse thoughts came to him. 'A place where people do not even

dare to come, this man sleeps carefree. He must be very much daring. I must kill him. But what mode shall I adopt to kill him ? Shall I separate his neck, as a fruit is separated from a tree ? Shall I peel his skin with a knife, as is done to a fruit ? Shall I hurl him into a blazing fire ? Shall I throw him up in the sky like a ball ? Shall I drown him into the sea ?'

But the very next moment, he changed his mind :

'After all, he is my guest. He has come to take shelter in my abode. It will be ridiculous to kill him. Even an enemy should not be killed if he be a guest. I should do him no harm till he wakes. Then I shall consider the right step.' He went out and assembled his attendants. Then he returned inside the palace.

But he could not contain himself for long. As he saw Ratnasar still in deep slumber, his blood boiled again, and he thundered :

"You shameless wretch ! Does it look nice to lie like this in another's couch ? Get up and fly, or be ready for a fight."

"Why do you disturb me ? You need be kept busy. I bid you to rub my feet with *ghee* mixed with water and put me to sleep again."

These words surprised the *yaksa*. 'Men are afraid of me,' thought he, 'but what sort of man this may be who bids me to rub his feet. He must be a very divine person. I must obey him.'

So he started rubbing his feet as ordered. He became a slave unto him. After the *yaksa* had done it for some time, Ratnasar sat up and said,

"I am sorry for putting you to this humiliating job, but I am pleased that you obeyed me. Ask for a boon. I shall undertake any difficult job to help you."

This was a greater surprise for the *yaksa*.

'A human being wliling to give a boon to one who is a

divine person. Normally, a god gives a boon to a human being. What new thing can this fellow offer of which I may be in need ? But let me see.'

So thinking, the *yaksa* said very politely :

"Sire, I do not know of any on the earth, in heaven or in the nether world who can offer me anything I do not myself possess. But since you insist, I must ask. May I take it that you will not decline ?"

"Speak out what you want. I stand by my words."

"Then, sir, you take over the administration of this city. I deem you fit for this job. So you rule here and have a nice time. I shall help you in all possible manners."

Ratnasar was caught up in his own snares, Thought he, 'This fellow offers me a kingdom, and a kingdom is obtained only when auspicious *karma* is up. But already I am under a vow not to acquire a kingdom. And at the same time I am promise-bound to this fellow to honour my words. What is to be done now ?"

After some consideration, he said,

"My dear fellow ! As to the acquisition of the kingdom, I am already under a vow not to do so. Therefore, ask for something else. What's the utility of gold (ear-ring) that obstructs hearing ?"

"But, sir, you have given me your words of honour, and honest people do not transgress them even if it may cost them their life."

"Since a kingdom becomes a cause of much sinful activity, I did undertake a vow pretty early never to acquire one. And you will agree, to transgress a vow is the worst of all sinful activities. I cannot strike at my own feet with an axe to suit your purpose, or even to please you. So you see, it is necessary for you to ask for something else."

The *yaksa* now lost his temper.

"This is very unworthy of an honest man, I must say.

Now a duel is inevitable to settle it, and, as I can see, one must die. Do you think it will be less sinful? When I, a god, desire you to do something, where is the question of transgressing the vow? I have given you a good chance, my dear sir, and you are a fool not to make use of it. You know, you lay on my bed; you made me rub your legs; and now you dishonour me! This is extremely impertinent and I warn you about the consequence. So long as I am favourably disposed towards you, I can do anything to help you; but once I am angry, you will find no place where to hide your head."

Ratnasar remained silent. The situation being what it was, what else could he do? This all the more irritated the *yaksa*. He threatened him again and repeated the threat for the third time. The *yaksa* now caught him by the hairs and threw him in the sky. As he was falling, he held him between his hands and said,

"Don't invite sure death by your foolishness. It is not wise to refuse a kingdom. I discharged even menial duties to please you, and you disobey me even on the most coveted offer. Well, this is your last chance. So long I did save you because I was favourably disposed towards you; but you deserve no genial treatment, since you have only slight for me. So I must now set you right I must hurl you on the yonder rock, as a washerman does with his clothes against an wooden plank. You will die a painful death and go to hell."

So saying he brought Ratnasar to the rock-side. But Ratnasar did not waver. With his firmness, he said,

"Do what you please. Ratnasar has never transgressed his vow, nor will he do so now. He is above fear and greed. No power on earth can make him change his mind."

Even the power of a divine being breaks before the power of a mighty soul. The *yaksa* admitted defeat. He gave up his disguise and appeared in his celestial form. He congratulated Ratnasar for his strength of mind and steadfastness about the vow and said,

"Sir, I confirm that you are the foremost among the people who are well known for their steadfastness. Men like you alone justify the epithet of the Mother Earth as being the mother of heroes. My real name is Chandra Sekhara. While in heaven, I had heard about your stead-fastness. The heavenly surgeon Harinegamesi, one day, extolled you so high as to suggest that you would not accept even a kingdom to uphold your vow. So I came down to hold the test, and, I must candidly admit, your performance excels all expectation. Pleased as I am with you, I request you now to seek a boon.

With his usual detachment, Ratnasar said,

"Divine sire ! By the grace of spiritual power, I have all I need. I want nothing. But if you so please, I suggest, you fix yourself in religion."

The god now restored the parrot to Ratnasar and shifted the two to their own city. Then he took leave and disappeared.

We now reach a happy end to Ratnasar story. The story of his steadfastness reached far and wide, and men, even monarchs, organised receptions for him and held him in the highest esteem. Many years passed since he had left his parental home on the back of his father's steed. So Ratnasar's mind moved thither. Therefore, in the company of his two wives, Tilakamanjari and Asokamanjari, he came back to his own city, where a reception was held in his honour by the king

Such a worthy man throughout his life, Ratnasar could not but pass his old age still more worthily. Once Dharma Suri, the master of all knowledge save the *kevala jnana*, had come there, and Ratnasar came to pay his obeisance and homage to him. Even King Samar Singha had come. Now, on a query by the king himself as to the pious *karma* in previous births, by dint of which Ratnasar came to command so much prestige and fame, the learned sage gave the following account, which is the subject-matter of the next story.

RATNASAR JATAKA

(Story of his previous birth)

"In the land of Bharata, in the city of Rajpur, there reigned King Jitasatru, whose son was Srisar. The prince had three friends in the son of a general, the son of a minister and the son of a merchant. One day there was a theft in the king's harem and the thief was caught red-handed by the police chief Now, as the police chief was taking the thief to the execution ground, he saw the prince on the way. On enquiry by the prince, the police chief on his own part gave an account about the theft, but the thief also got a chance to apprise the prince of his part of the story. On hearing the two versions, the prince turned to the police chief and said,

"As the case concerns my mother's ornaments, you leave the thief with me. I shall deal with him appropriately "

"The prince brought the thief outside the city, where he gave him good counsel not to steal any more. The fellow was truly inspired and he took the vow not to steal. So the prince set him free.

"The prince's enemies came to know of this and reported the matter to the king. The king at once sent for the prince, rebuked him severely and ordered him to leave the city. His friends too went with him. As the four had gone a long way, they reached a forest and spent three days there. On the fourth day, they reached a village. They cooked their food and were about to eat when a monk came there, Amiable by nature, the prince served him food and the minister's son, and the merchant's son approved of it. The general's son however, suggested that some food should be kept aside for their own use.

"After some time, as the king's wrath was pacified, he

recalled the prince. Later, he was crowned a king and had a glorious reign That king, Srisar, is now born as Ratnasar, as you see him ; the son of the minister and the son of the merchant are his two consorts, Tilakamanjari and Asokamanjari, and the general's son is born as the parrot. The thief liberated by Srisar and placed under the vow is now a *deva* named Chandrachuda, and he is all the time extending an umbrella of protection to his former benefactor."

SINGHAL SINGHA

Singhaleswar was the king of Singhal island. His queen's name was Singhala and that of his son Singhal Singha. One day the prince had gone to the garden-house. It was spring and the trees were in full bloom. As the prince was pacing through, admiring their beauty, he heard a pitiable cry, which appeared to be that of a woman The prince at once rushed towards her and saw that a young girl was held by an elephant in its trunk. He asked the elephant to release the girl at once and come forward to meet him if he was really strong On hearing this, the elephant released the girl and rushed upon the prince in full fury. The prince at once took out his wrapper and raised it like a wall with both his hands The elephant struck on it with its tusks. The prince now caught hold of the tusks and jumped on them, and in no time he was seated on the crest of the elephant striking it severely with an iron hook. This soon pulled the elephant down. The prince then tied him to a pillar When the king heard the account, he became happy at the prince's bravery. This soon became a talk of the whole city. The girl saved by the prince happened to be the daughter of a merchant named Dhana. Her own name was Dhanavati. She was charmed at the prince's bravery. The merchant, her father, took this chance to settle her in marriage with the prince.

Now, it so happened that the prince's physical grace and manliness was a pet topic for gossip among the ladies of the city. This was very much detested by the business community. To get rid of the prince, therefore, the merchants made false allegations against him, and, at their suggestion, the king prohibited his open movement in the city.

This was an encroachment on the prince's freedom of movement, which he bitterly detested, the more so since he never cared to look at women-folk and had no weakness for them. He preferred to leave the city and regain his freedom

once again. He took his wife into confidence and she approved of the idea and offered to go with him.

So the two left the palace one night, and, reaching the sea shore, they went on a voyage. Unfortunately, the ship was caught in a terrible storm. The captain tried his best to save it, but then a gust of wind sealed its fate and the ship was broken to pieces. Most of the people on board were drowned. Separated from her husband, Dhanavati, supporting herself on a floating plank, was washed ashore to a place near the city of Kusumpura.

In that city, there was a temple dedicated to a *yaksa* named Priyamelaka His speciality was that, if propitiated, he helped to bring together people separated by accident Dhanavati heard about this temple, went there and started her penance to propitiate the diety.

Meanwhile, her husband, Prince Singhal caught another plank and was washed ashore to a place near the city of Ratnapur There reigned King Ratnaprabha whose wife was Ratnasundari and whosed daughter was Ratnavati About the time the prince had reached the city, the princess suffered from a snake bite, and when all other remedies failed, it was the prince who cured her. This little episode ended in a marriage between the two.

The day there was ship-wreck, and the prince was separated from Dhanavati, he undertook the vow to remain celibate till he was reunited with her, and hence the marriage with Ratnavati created a real problem for him. It was the first night after the marriage and the bride was waiting in her decorated chamber at the seventh floor. The prince came, but he lay on the floor This raised all sorts of suspicion in Ratnavati's mind. She could not remain silent for long and asked the prince the reason for his quaint behaviour. The prince, however, suppressed the fact and said,

"My dear ! When I started on the last voyage, I took the vow not to indulge in sex behaviour till I saw my respected father."

"Sir ! Thou art noble, thou art worthy, to have such a high regard for thy parent," said the princess.

To the king, his father-in-law, however, he tendered a correct account, and expressed a desire to go out in search of his first wife. The king heartily approved, and lent him the service of a minister, Rudradatta, to assist him in his search. So one day, Prince Singhal, his wife Ratnavati, and the minister Rudradatta, all the three were again on board a ship.

Now, as the minister saw Ratnavati, he felt a weakness for her and soon he hatched a plan to throw the prince into the sea so that the lady would be his. He was only waiting for a chance. The chance came one night when, as everybody else was fast asleep, the prince came on board and stood near the brim, and the minister, unperceived, pushed him into the sea. As soon as the plan was executed, he raised an alarm, but it was too late and no trace of the prince could be found. When Ratnavati came to know of the tragedy, she was very sorry. Rudradatta came to console her and promised her all happiness if she was prepared to live with him.

This was a new danger for the princess. But being alone in the ship, she was helpless. Still she contrived a plan and said,

"But I must perform the last rites of my departed husband before I can start a new life with you Don't you think, therefore, that I value not your offer."

This raised high hopes in the mind of the minister who started building castles in the air. It was a pleasant thought for him that he would be able to call a princess his own. The ship was now not very far from the coast when it dashed against a hidden rock and broke into pieces. In their bid to save themselves from drowning, the passengers tried to catch at the floating objects and swim ashore Ratnavati also did the same. With the support of a floating plank, she reached the coast near Kusumpur, and, therefrom, she reached the same temple where Dhanavati was already seated in penance.

It was a co-incidence that the minister, Rudra, too reached Kusumpur where he accepted service as a minister to the king.

When Prince Singhal was thrown into the sea, some unknown power had picked him up and placed him safely into

a hermitage. The hermit was highly pleased to see a bright young man in his compound with distinct marks on his body that signified a bright future for him as a king. He had a daughter named Rupavati for whom, he felt, the stranger-lad would make a nice groom So he made the proposal and the prince readily agreed. At the marriage ritual, the hermit bestowed on the prince a magic blanket yielding one hundred coins per day and a flying cot. The prince now sat on the cot with his new bride and directed it to carry him where Dhanavati was. The cot descended in the central park of Kusumpur.

Life is an arena of unions and separations. At a moment of the greatest expectation creeps in the greatest despair When the two had alighted in the park, the lady felt thirsty, and the prince went to the well to fetch water. As he threw the bucket inside, he heard a human voice saying,

"Please take me out."

The prince looked in and saw a snake. At once, he hurled his wrapper in and the next moment the snake was crawling on the ground. The first thing it did was to pin a sting on its benefactor. This was a grear set-back for the prince who said,

"Oh king of the snakes ! That is a nice gesture of gratitude you have made !"

"Mind it not, sir. I shall help you in difficulty."

So saying, he disappeared

The prince, however, did not die of the venom; but he turned into a hunchback.

As Rupavati saw a hunchback approach her with water, she refused to accept it, nor would she recognise the man as her husband. She took him to be a rogue come to deceive her So she did not even look at him and started a search for her missing husband. But as she could find him nowhere, she too took the way to the *yaksa* temple and started her penance.

Soon it became the talk of the town that three ladies were simultaneously propitiating the deity and would talk with none. The news reached the king's ears. He himself came to

the temple to ascertain the reason of their penance, but the ladies did not open their lips. An announcement was, therefore, issued at once to the effect that anyone who would make the ladies speak would win the princess royal. But no one came forward despite this attractive offer.

At last, the proclamation reached the ears of the hunchback. He now prepared a voluminous book whose pages were filled up with white ink and wrapped it in a fresh cloth. Then he came to the court. He told the king that if he were given a chance, he would try to make the ladies speak. Said he,

"Sire ! I have this curious book which contains the detailed account of the earth, its past, present and future. Each event is faithfully recorded in it. Now, if the relevant events are read out, I have no doubt that the ladies will speak."

So they all shifted to the temple where the ladies were on fast and silent The hunchback started reading from his book.

"Prince Singhal of Singhal island started with his wife Dhanavati on a voyage and was involved in a shipwreck."

He stopped.

Hearing her own account, Dhanavati spoke out, "Sir ! You are very wise. Read what happened next."

Everybody was surprised to hear the lady speak. No less so was the king himself. The hunchback started again.

"The prince caught hold of a plank and swam ashore near Ratnapur where he married Ratnavati and again went out to the sea. This time, a minister, Rudradatta by name, accompanied him. But he betrayed the prince to get his wife. He threw him into the sea one night."

So saying, he stopped and started winding up. Now Ratnavati spoke out,

"Sir ! Stop not at that. What happened next ?"

The king now joined with the lady to repeat the request, and the hunchback started again :

"The prince was lifted up by some unknown power even before he touched the water and placed in a hermit's compound where he was married with the hermit's daughter named Rupavati. The hermit gave him a magic blanket and a flying cot. The prince came with his bride to this very city, Kusumpur, where the cot landed in the park. As the lady became thirsty, the prince went to fetch some water from the well ; but as ill-luck would have it, he suffered from a snake bite"

So saying, he sighed a deep sigh and became silent. Now, Rupavati broke the silence and said,

"Sir ! It is painful to me that you have stopped at this point. I am interested to know what happened next"

The hunchback said nothing. He picked up his book and looked at the king who had promised, as per proclamation, to give the princess in marriage to one who would make the ladies speak. He had fulfilled it.

This was an unequal match and was disliked by the members of the king's household. But the king did not budge and celebrated the marriage at once.

The insuspicious *karma* of Prince Singhal were now on its way to move out and his life was to take a major turn. A god, the very one who had saved him at the sea, appeared and cured the prince of his physical defect, and the prince was his original self again. Thus it became an occasion of of great joy, a happy union of so many, for the three ladies, and for the king in particular who had such a nice young man as the husband of his daughter. The four co-wives embraced each other very cordially as sisters.

As the god revealed now, he was the prince's elder brother in the previous birth He attained a divine life for offering food to a monk. His younger brother then, now Prince Singhal, had also offered cane juice to the monk, but he was not very steadfast in faith and so he suffered so much in his life—separation from his wives, shipwreck, physical defect, etc. He also revealed that it was he who had saved him at the sea when his life was at stake On hearing these, the prince regained his long memory and saw his previous birth.

Rudradatta, the minister, was now dismissed by the king as a bad man because of his plot to drown the prince.

The prince, now a happy man, thought of returning home with his wives. They all took leave of the king and mounted on the flying cot which brought the party to the prince's insular home, where he was crowned king by his father, who had grown old. King Singhal lived a worthy life and did many things for the well-being of his people.

SAHASRAMALLA

Sahasramalla, the son of a merchant, lived in the city of Kausambi. His life was a pile of sinful deeds. He was an expert in cheating, telling lies and stealing. He spoke several languages and wore diverse dresses to suit each occasion. In brief, he was a complete rogue.

There was a jewel-merchant named Ratnasar who lived in the same city. Dressing like a merchant, Sahasramalla came one day to his shop and made enquiries about precious stones. Ratnasar spread a part of his stock before him, but Sahasramalla was not satisfied He wanted to see more. Ratnasar had no doubt about his genuineness and he took him to be a substantial customer who had come to buy wholesale. So he displayed his entire stock Sahasramalla appeared to be satisfied and said :

"My dear sir ! I shall take the entire stock but I shall pay the price to-morrow."

On hearing this, Ratnasar withdrew the stock saying,

"Sir ! I don't sell on credit."

Now, during the short time he was in the shop, he made a close observation of the interior. At night, he slipped into the shop through the sky-light. At the sound of something falling, Ratnasar's son, who was sleeping inside, woke up and caught the thief's leg. The thief tried to escape, and there ensued a severe tussle, in which the thief was severely wounded. Then the merchant's son took pity on him and let him go. The thief returned home and narrated the sad experience to his mother. On hearing him, the mother said,

"My son ! Suffering is the thief's lot. It cannot be that you will usurp another's treasure, and yet remain unhurt. Anyone who is afraid of suffering is unworthy of this pro-

fession. And compared with the suffering undergone by Sarana, I must say, yours is nothing. It is a pity that you are so much upset."

On being asked by her son, the mother narrated Sarana's life-story (see next story) and added,

"Now, you understand, my son, how insignificant is your own suffering when compared with that of Sarana. A thief must always be prepared to face situations like this. If you lose nerves, then you are unsuccessful. If you are confident, success is yours."

These words of his mother gave him confidence. One night, he broke into the priest's house and carried away much treasure. Happy at his success, he placed the treasure at the feet of his mother. She was also very happy and she enquired wherefrom he could get so much. The son said,

"Mummy dear ! Ask it not. Rather you go to the city and get me reports and reactions about the theft. Then you will know everything yourself."

In the morning, the mother went out to the city and heard people talk about a daring theft in the priest's house. One lady asked if the thief could be caught and another said that the matter had been reported to the king.

The king called in the police chief and rebuked him for his inefficiency and negligence to duty. Courtiers and leading citizens present at the court, all expressed alarm and promised full co-operation with the authorities in the detection of the thief. The mother collected all these reports from the town and returned home. Warning her son, she said,

"My son ! The whole city is now up and alert to catch the thief. You must be very careful in your movements.

Dressed like a millionaire, Sahasramalla went first to the barber's shop. The barber welcomed such a lucrative client. After haircut, shave, nail-cut, special massage and bath, the client said,

"Barber ! I am highly pleased with you. Send your son with me. I intend to send you a suitable reward."

This raised high expectation in the barber's mind. He sent his son with him at once. Sahasramalla now came to the shop of a cloth dealer name Dhanasar who extended him a very cordial welcome. He displayed all his costly fabrics before him. Sahasramalla selected a few and said,

"Sir ! I am taking these with me and presently shall I return with the money. My son remains here as security."

While placing the bundle of clothes before his mother, he said,

"Mummy dear ! Go at once to the city and get me full report about the talk of the town."

The mother went out and returned with the full report. Meanwhile, the barber and the merchant reported the matter to the king

"The thief has made fools of us" they said

A horse dealer was present at the court. He said,

"Your Majesty ! A man whose wealth is increasing must of necessity buy a horse. Besides, a horse is a must for a thief. So the fellow must come to me, and I shall at once get hold of him and bring him to the court."

A famous harlot, Kamapataka by name, who was also present, said,

"Sire ! A man to whom wealth comes as windfall must visit a public woman. I have no doubt that he will come to me to-night or at the earliest opportunity. Your majesty knows how intelligent am I. Can there be anything which Kamapataka takes up on hand and finishes not successfully ? The thief cannot hide himself anywhere, not even in the nether world. I shall detain him as soon as he comes and send message to the palace."

Sahasramalla who had full report through the mother thought now of crushing the pride of both who had bragged so much at the court. Now, duly dressed as a cavalier, he

first called on the horse-dealer who had halted outside the city. The dealer welcomed him. In a very cordial tone, Sahasramalla said,

"How is it, sir, that you have halted outside the city ? Worthy man such as you should stay inside the city."

"Sir ! I am a stranger to this city. I have no particular place in the city where I may stay. So I am comfortable here."

"What a nice excuse, sir. You are welcome at my residence. You may use it as your own"

The dealer wanted to change the topic and said,

"Sir ! If a stranger stays with somebody, it creates unnecessary suspicion and gossip. That is not good for the city itself. I am a merchant, interested in selling out my things and buying whatever salable merchandise I may get here. So I am quite at home outside the city."

"Suspicion may be generated, as you say, only if you stay with some well-known notoreity, but where is the scope for this if you stay in the midst of honest people ? If you stay with me, and if that raises unnecessary gossip, then what do I gain in keeping you with me ? I think you should have no objection in staying with me. I can assure you, sir, that there will be no trouble on either side."

The dealer was very much impressed by his cordiality and he accepted the invitation. Sahasramalla now took him straight to the harlot's home. In confidence, he told the lady,

"This rich horse-dealer is a foreigner and he is now your client. You make suitable arrangement for his reception"

Kamapataka was in a very high spirit. She allotted a well-furnished room for the dealer's use. Deeply obliged to Sahasramalla, she even offered to wash his feet with her own hands and make him comfortable. But said he,

"Wait ! I must see the king at once. Could you help me with some of your valuable ornaments ? I shall soon restore them to you"

The harlot had no reason to doubt the man's credentials who had brought such a substantial client for her. She at once placed all her costly ornaments before him. Sahasramalla placed them in a bag and hurriedly saw the horse-dealer, to whom he said,

"Sir ! I hope, you are comfortable here I must presently see the king on a very urgent business. Meanwhile, my lady will take care of you Since time is very important, if you mind not, I may use your horse to reach the palace."

The dealer could not refuse a man who had done so much to make him comfortable.

Thus with one of the finest steeds in the dealer's possession and the harlot's costly ornaments, Sahasramalla turned his steps homeward. He presented the whole booty to his mother and requested her to go to the city again

When Sahasramalla did not turn up in time, the harlot became restless She at once reached the palace and made enquires about a man on horse-back but none of the guards could throw any light She returned home and made enquiries of the new-comer about his companion. Said the harlot,

"You see, sir, he has taken all my valuable ornaments and has not turned up yet"

"He has taken my horse too. Tell me who he is. I am a stranger here. He told me that this was his own house and so I came hither in his compay. But now it appears that he was a rouge and I have been deceived."

Now, both the dealer and the lady reached the palace. When he reported the matter to the king, his anger knew no bound Said he,

"This seems to be an expert thief. He deceives everybody and escapes undetected. If he is not arrested, it will be a great shame for the administration." He sent for the police chief, and said to him,

"I give you five days' time to produce the thief. If you fail, severe punishment will be given to you."

The mother brought the full report for the son.

"You must be particularly careful, my son. The police chief is now after you."

"Mother ! Fear not. He won't be able to touch me even. I shall rob him of all his treasure and make gift unto you. Then, I am sure, you will congratulate me."

Sahasramalla now dressed himself like a brahmin. Passing through the main thoroughfares, he reached a temple. Some people were playing there the game of dice. Sahasramalla joined the group. While on patrol, even the police chief came there, and could not check the temptation of trying his luck. Now, it was a game between the police chief and Sahasramalla, and the former pawned his ring bearing his own name, which he lost. The thief thus earned the ring. Just at that time a messenger came from the court and desired the police chief to see the king at once. The police chief departed in a hurry.

With the ring in his possession, Sahasramalla reached the house of the police chief without delay, met his wife and said,

"Madam ! A colossal tragedy has befallen thee, and I have hurried hither to save thee. Pass on all thy valuables in my safe-keeping lest delay should cause thee much harm."

The lady could not believe her ears She said,

"Sir ! Wherefrom do you come ? Who has sent you hither ?"

"Madam ! I am coming straight from the police chief."

"Where is he ? What's the tragedy about ?"

"Madam ! The police chief is under arrest under orders from the king. The king's men tied him fast and were taking him when I saw him. For the protection of his valuables, he has deputed me hither, and has advised me to remove them to some safe place. If you have any doubt, here is the ring bearing his name."

So saying he produced the ring.

The lady now became extremely nervous and handed over all her valuables to him. Sahasramalla took no time to disappear with them.

When the police chief returned home, his wife said,

"My dear ! How have you been freed so soon ? Did you get somebody's assistance ? Has anybody stood surety for you ?"

"Why, who did arrest me ?"

"Well, the king himself, I am told."

"Who did tell you like that ?"

"Why, just a while ago, you had yourself deputed a man who carried your own ring. He asked me to keep all our valuables into his safe-keeping "

"But have you given him everything ?"

"Yes, I have done "

The police chief's head was now reeling He saw darkness all around. Sighing deeply he said,

"I am undone. I had an assignment to arrest him within five days on pain of severe penalty, and now I have been robbed myself. What shall I do now ? How shall I show my face to the king "

His grief knew no bound. He came to the king On hearing him, the king said,

"You are all a worthless lot Now it is my turn to hunt him out I shall leave no stone unturned to detect him, wherever he may be on the earth, in heaven or in the nether world I have to assure protection to my own people."

Very humbly the police chief submitted,

"Your Majesty ! I have no doubt that you will be able to catch him. When the monarch himself moves, that's a sure protection."

Sahasramalla again got the report from the mother and became forewarned Said he to his mother,

"Mother ! How fortunate am I that I have been able to mobilise the king himself."

Sahasramalla was not merely an expert in changing robes, he was also an expert in many arts. He dressed himself like a masseur and reached the palace-gate. He sought an interview with the king. Soon he was in his majesty's presence. He bowed low before the king and said,

"Your Majesty ! I have sought this audience with thee to get a chance to lay my expertise at thy feet. May your majesty be pleased to allow me to demonstrate my ability !"

The king agreed. He removed his costly robes and ornaments, placed them aside and became ready He lay on a couch and Sahasramalla started the trick of his hands. The comfort soon lulled him to sleep. Sahasramalla did not miss the chance. He picked up the king's robes and ornaments, put them into a bag and returned home. He placed the booty at the feet of his mother and narrated that day's experience.

When the king got up, he looked around. There was neither the man nor his royal robes and jewellery The king took no time to perceive that he had been deceived in his own palace. His face turned pale. He came to the court but could scarcely settle his mind on anything. The ministers, officers, nobles and others did not understand the cause of this change in the king At last, someone gathered courage and made enquiries about the king's health. The king then narrated the previous night's episode. Then said the minister :

"Sire ! This is no ordinary thief, He cann't be caught by the power of the police, it seems. Some suitable strategy or enchanted words must be used for this purpose."

"Minister ! Till he is caught, I find no peace. Think seriously of some way leading to his imediatearrest."

Thinking a while, the minister said,

"I suggest, sire, in this difficult job, we must seek the assistance of holy men. They have in their possession

enchanted words (*mantras*), and they are veterans in wisdom. I am sure, they may suggest something worthwhile."

The suggestion at once appealed to the king and it was given effect to immediately. A number of holy men were called in and were requested to give their advice in the matter. All of them tried their enchanted words, but Sahasramalla was so very intelligent that he escaped.

Repeated successes emboldened the thief and made him undaunted and reckless There was a panic in the city. Anybody who challenged him lost his life He had no scrupple even to rob the weaker sex, as if he had a complete licence. This was a source of great anxiety for the king and the entire administration.

In the midst of this widespread gloom, there appeared a streak of light when there came a monk, Visuddha by name, who possessed *kevala jnana*. The king came to pay homage to the monk, and so also came the people from the whole city. Even Sahasramalla did not keep aside Kevali Visuddha said in his sermon :

"To kill, to lie, to indulge in sex behaviour, to have reckless acquisition—these characterise an impious soul. Such a person behaves wrongly with others ; but he should know that whatever is painful to self is also painful to others. So one must not be bad in his behaviour to others. If you have right to joys of life, everyone else has a similar right."

The sermon had a great impact on everybody, but the greatest on the thief, whose whole life now lay before him, like an open book and he felt the highest remorse for all that he had done. The most dominant thought in his mind now was that he had acquired the greatest of sins. In depriving others of their all, he felt, he himself had been the most deprived. The trend of his thought was now inward. When other people had departed, he came near the monk and made the following submission :

"Very noble sire ! There is no vile activity on earth which these stained hands had not perpetrated. They have acquired such a notoreity that they now never shrink from

them. But I am thrilled by thy holy words, and my rock-like heart is now melted. Please save me and show me the way."

The Kevali said,

"My dear fellow ! Religion is a quick and intense remedy even for the worst sinner. Ennoble thy soul by restraint and be pure "

"Holy sire ! I am ready to do whatever you suggest But I have one very humble request. You repair from here to somewhere else and there fix me in restraint. The king here is very much after me. If by any chance he comes to know of me, I will forfeit opportunity to improve, I am a well-known thief of this city and I have thrown dust into the eyes of everybody, including the king."

The Kevali admonished,

"So long as you have fear, my dear fellow, you cannot practise restraint. Have, therefore, no fear from the king or the people. You have to make a frank confession. Confession rightly done changes the whole situation, and you benefit in the end. Even the adversary's mind changes and age-old feelings are washed away. To-morrow you will come at the time of my sermon. You will get chance to confess and then get fixed in restraint."

Sahasramalla agreed. Next day, the congregation met as usual, and the king and thousands of citizens were assembled. Through his sermon, the Kevali wiped out the doubts of everybody about the past, the present and the future. When the sermon was over, the king made his submission about the thief and sought guidance about his detection.

The Kevali ordained,

"Oh king ! He is no longer a thief. The agony of your city is now ended. You tried your best to detect him but you did not succeed. Have no more worry now. He is turned into an honest man."

"*Bhante* ! How did it happen ?"

"Oh king ! His heart is changed. He is repentant and on the way to burn his past sins. He is seated beside you on your left-hand side. You allay your hatred of him and approve of his desire to court restraint."

The king now cordially received Sahasramalla and the latter, in his turn, fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven. Both had tears in their eyes, but these were tears of affection. Sahasramalla on his own part invited the king to his own house to receive the entire treasure he had amassed through his life-time. Said he,

"Sire ! I have no need of this. I shall be relieved to lay all this at thy feet They may be restored to their rightful owners."

This was done as desired

Sahasramalla now came back to the Kevali in the company of his mother and both were inducted in the holy order as monk and nun. To wash off his past sins, Sahasramalla went on fast for a month. The body which was so long instrumental in the acquisition of sins *(karma)* now became ready for liberation therefrom. The vast accumulation of dreadful sins started decumulating and the soul was on the road to perfection. In this way, through sincere perseverance, clean intentions and auspicious tinges, the soul became free of the wrappings of *karma* and attained *kevala jnana*. In that state, he stayed on the earth for some time, and then, plugging wholly the activities of body, mind and expression, he fixed himself rock-like, ultimately entering into liberation

SARANA

Sarana, a well-known dice-player, was a resident of the city of Avanti. Dice was, so to say, a passion with him, and in this, he squandered his all. He was now literally starving, and yet he could not start any business for want of capital. So he turned into a house-breaker. One day, he reached the house of a merchant where the father and the son were talking, as follows :

Father—"I want to store ten thousand gold coins in some safe place to be used in case of unforeseen contingencies."

Son—"It is a laudable idea, sir, but what will be the safe place for this ?"

Father—"I think the cremation ground."

Sarana at once transferred himself to the cremation ground, and attired like a monk, he controlled his respirations and lay like a corpse in one corner.

Meanwhile, the merchant and his son came there The merchant asked his son to check around carefully ; for, he knew that if anybody was in hiding in the neighbourhood, his whole plan would fall through. In fulfilling his assignment, the son carefully searched the entire neighbourhood but found no living person anywhere, except a corpse. He checked him carefully, touched him, turned him, but found no trace of life, though the body bore no mark of any wound. The son came back nnd apprised his father. The merchant said at once, ' Maybe he is an expert cheat. You go again and examine him once more."

The son returned and examined the body again, this time more carefully than before, but found nothing to alter his previous finding. Then he held his leg and dragged him to some distance. Sarana bore everything with patience and

did not give up control on his respiration. The son came back and reported to the father. Said the father,

"Surely this fellow is a class one rogue. He has carefully spread his trap to cheat us. We need be very careful about him. So go again, my son, and cut his nose and ears this time. If he is alive, he will give a shriek. If he does nothing, then we shall be fully assured.

The son did as instructed but Sarana bore even the cut and did neither move nor shriek. Now, the merchant had no doubt that it was a corpse and not a living being. So the father and the son dug a ditch, buried the treasure and returned home.

After they had left, Sarana did his own job. He dug out the entire treasure and brought it home.

Days passed. One day, the merchant sent his son to check if the treasure was in tact; but the son discovered only an empty ditch Very much depressed, he came back home and reported. The merchant said,

"Surely, that one was a cheat and not a dead man. He had very effectively spread the trap to rob us. He must be a very strong fellow that he patiently bore the physical pain of the nose cut and the ear-cut. Now, in the city, we must be on the look-out for a man who is without a nose and ears That will be the easy way to detect the thief."

In a few days, the merchant caught the man he was looking for. He held him by the hand, took him aside and said,

"You must be a great guy Such a daring act is not possible for an ordinary mortal. I know, man, how you lost your nose and ears."

The man was neither ashamed nor alarmed, nor did he strive to hide anything. In a very normal tone, he retorted,

"Sir, no pain is high enough to acquire a treasure."

"Worthy hero ! May I make you a request ? Whatever

still remains unspent or unsquandered, you should restore to me. I shall properly reward you."

"You may take the whole of it, sir, but let it not reach the king's ears."

The merchant rewarded the thief and reacquired whatever portion of his treasure was still there.

DHISTA

Prince Sura lived in the city of Dhara. His wife, Chatura, was a shrew with a sharp tongue. Sura was very sorry for her behaviour. He tried his best to improve her but there was no outcome. So he thought of taking another wife and was on the look-out for a suitable bride. One day, he reached the house of an old woman in the city of Avanti. She had a beautiful daughter named Sundari. When Sura made the proposal to marry her, the woman said,

"I shall give my daughter to one who agrees to look after me. This daughter is my only support."

Sura agreed, got married and brought the newly-married wife home. Chatura became furious to know this, but she was helpless So now she applied the only instrument at her disposal. She would torture the co-wife, often quarrel with her and use harsh words. Soon Sundari became disgusted. The prince then housed them in separate buildings, but still there could be no peace. Chatura would often come to Sundari's house to quarrel with her, to beat her, to bite her with her teeth, to scratch her skin with her nails The situation went out of control

Sura now housed Sundari at a distance of 10 *kosas* (20 miles). The mother lived with her, Sura often visiting.

One day, as Sura was about to go to her house, Chatura came to know of it. She lauded the idea in so many words and gave her husband some *modaka* to be taken on the way. When Sura reached the bank of a river, he sat down to rest and ate the *modaka*. This was an enchanted staff and no sooner had he taken it than he changed into a dog Now, instead of proceeding to Sundari, the dog returned to Chatura. She tied the dog and beat him half-dead.

"Will you go again to Sundari ?" she said in anger.

Then she restored the dog to human form. It took Sura a whole month to recover.

But he could not check the temptation of visiting Sundari for long, nor could he keep his plan a secret, so that this time Chatura gave him another sweet named *karamba* to be taken on the way. As previously, Sura reached the bank of the river and was about to eat the sweet, when a hermit with matted hairs came there and sought the whole of it. Now, no sooner had the hermit taken it than he turned into an ass. And the ass took the road to Chatura's house, Sura following from behind.

As the ass reached Chatura's house, she tied it fast and showered all her passion on its back. The animal brayed bitterly but Chatura would take no respite till it was half dead. Then the ass was released and turned into a human being And lo behold ! It was a hermit in matted hairs. Chatura was terrified on the realisation of what she had done to a holy man. She fell at his feet and begged sincerely to be forgiven These are the only words the hermit uttered while departing :

"Correct is the saying, '*Whosoever eats karamba undergoes pain*'."

Fear always haunts a sinful soul. Chatura was afraid that whatever her machination, her husband could not love her. This anguish always tortured her. So she hatched a plan at once to get rid of her husband. She arranged a sacrifice to propitiate the deity and she was successful. As she dropped her offerings into the fire, a snake came out and said,

"What can I do for you, madam ? I am pleased with your propitiation and I am at your service "

Chatura was happy. She said,

"My husband goes to another woman. I cannot bear this So you deprive him of his life."

"I shall do this as you desire, but it will take a little time I tell you, at the end of six months, your husband will fall a dead man."

So saying, the snake departed

Sura witnessed the whole thing from a distance and thought,

"How mean is the woman's conduct; not even the Brahma can fathom its depth."

After all this, he had no courage to return home, and he directed his steps towards Sundari's residence, where he settled from that day, and decided not to see Charuta any more.

Sundari tried her best to make him happy through conversation, dance and music, but Sura remained indifferent all the time If someone is unhappy in the family, even others cannot be happy. So one day, Sura's mother-in-law said,

"My son ! What's wrong with you ?"

"Mother ! What's the use of stating it when it's beyond cure ?"

"But, my son, sometimes the affection of the near-and-dear ones may hit upon something that may help What's the harm in your telling me ? Maybe when the disease is diagnosed, a remedy may come up"

Still Sura wanted to suppress, but in the face of an overwhelming affection, he could not. He gave a full account and said,

"On the completion of six months from that fateful day, I must die."

"Don't you worry about it You leave it to me and I shall set it right. Be happy from now. My own ward's happiness is linked up with you"

Sura felt somewhat relieved but could not be fully assured. Chatura's words would often ring into his ears and he could find no rest.

Sundari and her mother painted two peacocks on the wall outside. They were so life-like. Both the ladies duly worshipped the two everyday. Thus six months passed and the

fateful day arrived when Sura was to die of snake bite. He was restless, but the two ladies gave him courage and Sundari said,

"You see our power, my dear. If there be some Power on earth that kills, there's a greater Power that saves."

The ladies now cleaned a spot in the room and purified it. Then they placed a cushion at the centre and on it sat the prince The two ladies now, with enchanted rice in their hands, looked around for the snake. Soon their eyes detected one and at once they hurled their rice at the peacocks What a wonder ! They were no longer a coat of paint, but one of them actually descended from the wall, picked up the snake and flew away in the sky. Sura witnessed all this dumb and amazed. He saw the infallible power of the enchanted words. He felt as if he had acquired a fresh life.

Chatura's plan was thus upset She got a report from a traveller that Sura was hail and hearty, living happily and making charities everyday. She now turned herself into a white cat and reached Sundari's house When the mother and the daughter saw the cat in their house and read into its intentions, they themselves became two black cats and chased the white one. But the white one jumped on both, tearing each with sharp claws Even the combined strength of the two was no match for the strength of the white cat. After scratching them severely, the white cat returned home.

When Sura asked all about it, the ladies said,

"The cat was none other than your first wife who had come to chastise us But as it commanded a greater power, it overpowered us both and escaped unhurt."

Sura was again depressed and wanted now to get rid of all the three ladies. Hardly a month had passed when the white cat appeared again and the same scene repeated, with similar outcome. After the encounter was over, Sundari came to her husband and said,

"My dear ! When the white cat comes next time, you will have to help us. When we shall be fighting, you only

say, 'Black cats, kill the white cat'. At once our power will increase and we shall throw it on the ground."

This time the white cat came earlier. It had gained confidence by her previous successes. Now, as soon as the fight started, Sura came up and said,

"Black cats ! Kill the white cat."

At once their power increased tremendously and the white cat was down rolling on the ground beneath them, and the black cats pressed so hard at its neck that it was about to die. Now, Sura thought,

"If my words can give strength to the black cats, similar words may give strength to the white one, and I may be rid of all the three. Let me try." And he said aloud,

"White cat ! Kill the black ones."

And the black cats soon lay dead. Even the white cat didn't live long thereafter.

When all the three were thus dead and gone, Sura felt relieved. He performed the last rites for all the three, and came straight to his brother's house where he was received by his sister-in law Destiny is so powerful that it pursues a man wherever he may go. One day, as Sura was sitted and his sister-in-law was standing beside him, a man came from the farm to announce the death of a bull while ploughing the land. He said that if it was not immediately replaced by a new bull, the work of cultivation would suffer. As soon as the lady heard this, she at once showered some powder on Sura's head which at once turned him into a bull. It was then led to the farm and yoked to the plough

Poor Sura ! What a miserable life started for him ! Days passed. One day, the hook in his nose broke and fell down. This at once dispelled the charm and Sura regained his human form At once he slipped away from the farm. On the highway, he met his brother who expressed a deep concern at the severe wounds on his body and requested him to accompany him home. Declining the offer, Sura said,

"My brother ! Let thy home be sweet unto thee. My

sister-in-law is a devil in carnate. She turned me into a bull and yoked me at the plough. The wounds you see have been derived therefrom. Now I shall go to your home only when I desire to be changed into a bull. Till then let me keep afar from your home. For me, even life in the forest is more covetable. It seems that all homes are haunted by the devil."

So saying, Sura turned his steps towards the forest, and soon he was in the very depth of it. There he saw six men attired in costly robes with a load of grass on each head It caused him surprise. When he made enquiry, the men said,

"Here lives an old lady in the forest, who is crippled in body, but is the very embodiment of kindness At her bid, we take these bundles of grass for her, and in exchange, we are given rich and fresh robes. This has made our life happy."

Sura said,

"My dear friends ! I shall be obliged to see the lady. Will you be good enough to accept me in your company and introduce me to her ?"

They agreed. Sura now gathered a load of grass and started with them. When they reached the lady, she enquired about the stranger The men said.

"Madam ! We met him in the forest. We have it from him that his name is Dhista. He desires to join with us in supplying you grass May we hope that you will kindly accept him ?"

The lady looked very much pleased. She patted on Dhista's back and said,

"My son ! You are very weak. You stay with me and have a nice time."

Dhista said,

"Mother ! I am very unfortunate. In rolling through a hard life, I have reached here. Now, I want to spend the rest of my life at thy feet."

The lady cast a very affectionate glance at him, at which Dhista felt obliged. He took bath, wore fresh clothes and ate delicious dishes.

A mood of enquiry invariably unlocks fresh avenues of knowledge. Dhista felt inquisitive as to what the lady did with such a huge quantity of grass. At night, he lay with his companions but did not sleep At mid-night, the lady got up and checked everybody. She made sure that everybody was fast asleep. Then, with the help of chanted words, she changed herself into a mare, ate the whole stock of grass and thereafter became a beautiful damsel She then put on the best dress and ornaments and started. Dhista followed her in disguise. She now reached a cave where she was received by a few female spirits, who asked,

"What offer you have prepared for us ?"

"Have patience. I have gathered seven men for you, six of whom are fat and plump. Only the seventh man is lean and weak He is a recent arrival. However, I have started feeding him well and I have no doubt that he will put on sufficient flesh by the fourteenth day (of the fortnight). He is also meant for you"

The devils were highly pleased But Dhista was alarmed For, death was following him so closely on his heels He had no doubt that this lady, herself a devil, would put him to death at the earliest available opportunity. In the morning, as usual, they all started for cutting grass. On the way, as Dhista narrated his night's experience, all the six protested,

"We haven't detected any evil intention in the lady's behaviour so far."

Dhista—"My dear friends ! A comfortable life has blinded you ; but you won't escape from her trap, I tell you. I am not going to stay here even for a moment."

The six—"Stay for a day more, and let us make sure of what you say. If your apprehension proves true, we shall go with you."

Dhista agreed. The day passed as usual. At night, all

the seven did not sleep, and, following the lady incognito, they had a corroboration of what Dhista had said. They now sat thinking about a suitable plan Dhista suggested that such an evil character must not be allowed to live, and since she was too powerful for anyone of them, they must pull up their whole strength together and put her to death There was unanimity among all the seven and the action started at once. Two men held the lady by the legs, two held her head fast and one of them beat her so severely with a club that the poor witch breathed her last. Now, there was nothing to be afraid of, and so the seven friends started from there. Passing through a forest, they reached the bank of the Sipra, and therefrom, a fine city on its bank ; but to their surprise, they found it wholly deserted. They entered into it and reached at last the palace gate, where sat an old lady. The lady at once received them and said,

"Good fellows ! Here are seven beautiful damsels for you You accept them"

Dhista—"But, mother, tell us first who they are, and wherefrom do they come. The whole city is deserted, and the presence of seven damsels in such a lonely place causes us both surprise and suspicion."

The lady—"My good fellows ! These are *vidyadhara* girls. One day, their father had enquired of an astrologer about their prospective husbands. The astrologer suggested that the girls should be entrusted to me and that the husband would come without seeking. So I am here. You now relieve me of my charge by accepting the girls."

Continued the lady,

"Here you have everything that makes life pleasant—finest cushions, dressing rooms and bed chambers, and most beautiful damsels. You enjoy life in their company. There are seven fine steeds in the stable, and you enjoy a ride on their back in any direction save the east. I bid thee strictly not to go in the eastern direction even by mistake"

The offer seemed attractive and the seven agreed. It was a pleasant life for them in the company of *vidyadhara*

girls. Sometimes they would be on the swings dangling in the air, sometimes in the garden plucking beautiful flowers, and sometimes in the lake enjoying a bath in the company of the girls. One day the seven met together to consider the taboo imposed on their movement in the eastern direction, and they decided to go thither to unfold the mystery behind it. They started on horse back, all the seven together. Hardly they had gone some distance, they saw piles of human bones as far as the eyes could reach. They now looked at each other. Just at that moment, the hoof of one of the horses struck against a skull and the skull at once laughed aloud and said,

"I too once enjoyed the same horses and the same girls."

Everybody was afraid and surprised. But Dhista gathered courage and said,

"Who are these horses, pray, and who are these girls ? Who was the lady we met at the palace gate and how is this place so much infested with human bones ?"

The skull—"This shameless witch is a notorious devil. She has killed us all. If you have love for your life, fly away at once."

At these words, all the seven got so much terrified that they ran at once. Without so much as turning their faces even once, all the seven were on their horses till the sun was high up in the middle of the sky

Finding the men not come back, the seven girls at once reported to the guardian lady. She at once picked up her enchanted drum and reached the top of the mansion. Therefrom she could detect at a great distance all the seven men fleeing. She started beating on the drum to turn the horses and she was readily effective. The seven tried to jump down from their horses but could not. They now sat helpless on their horses as the lady recalled them near her and thundered,

"Fools ! Why did you flee from my trap ? Try it again if you can."

" These are your last moments "

So saying, she displayed her long bloody tongue, and with an unsheathed sword in her hand, she trampled Dhista beneath her heels and said,

"Confess, ye fool, whither bound you were on horse-back ? These are your last moments on the earth. Remember your creator."

For a moment, Dhista felt nervous, but soon he gathered courage and said,

"Old devil ! 'But tell me first who did cut thy nose ?"

The question pleased the lady who released him at once and said,

"Lucky man ! Let me give you an account. In the land of Bharata, there is a city named Manorama where reigned King Manorath. His queen Manimala gave birth to seven sons and one daughter I am that daughter When I reached the threshold of youth, I developed a test for spells and enchantments and soon mastered all the arts leading to hypnotism, mesmorism, slaughter, maddening, demon-arts, moving to heaven, hiding in the nether world, attracting planets, etc. I also acquired the art of making alive a corpse. With these special powers, I reached one day the court of Indra, the king of gods, where I met many heavenly stage-players, and learnt from them the art of dramatics. This soon brought me a chance to dance at Indra's court and I pleased him by my performance. When he desired me to ask for a boon, what else could I ask for but seek Indra as my husband ? And to this he kindly agreed. Henceforth I became a regular visitor to heaven and had a very nice time there."

The lady further continued her account :

"You do not know, my dear fellow, how life at times takes a major turn without giving any notice. One day, my gardener, whom I favoured, desired to go to heaven with me and see the stage performance there with his own eyes. I couldn't disoblige him. I turned him into a black bee who stuck at my petticoat, and with him thus I reached heaven. The performance started and I was on the stage,

but I couldn't fully exert myself because of the load on my pettycoat and my dance was thus spoiled This infuriated Indra who cursed me not to go to heaven any more but to live on the earth and suffer for my error. At that time, he cut my nose. I was perplexed and couldn't conceive for a moment that I could be in a situation like that. I fell at Indra's fit begging piteously to be forgiven, and humbly sought about the time of my deliverance. At this, Indra took pity on me and prescribed human flesh for my daily intake and said, 'The day a human would tell thee—woman, who did cut thy nose,—that thou shalt attain deliverance.' So I descended on this city, and with the help of these girls and horses, I deceived all the residents here and lived on their flesh I didn't even spare the strangers visiting the city. But none so far did dare to ask me the question you did to-day. None had ever thought of it. You did a very right thing, and by dint of it, you are my deliveror. I am grateful to you. I now very gladly bestow on you the use of these girls, the horses and the city."

Dhista—"Thank you, madam, for the kind offer; but tell me what shall I do with a deserted city ?"

The lady—"Sir ! With my arts, if I know to kill, I also know to make dead men alive. The kingdom I offer thee cannot be a desert."

The lady now applied her art and the city was back to life again. She handed over the administration to Dhista and disappeared, never to be seen again.

Dhista took over the reign of the highest office and gave very high positions in the state to his companions.

One day, an acharya came to that city. He gave his sermons, after which King Dhista expressed his inquisitiveness about the devils' traps that were so often laid In the course of his life. So said the monk :

"Oh king ! In your previous birth, you were a brahmin named Haridatta in the city of Pratisthanapur. The brahmin had six servants. His daily hobby was to attract spirits and tease them, in which the six servants were his

accomplices. Fortunately, a *muni* came to that city, whose words influenced all the seven and gave them a chance to acquire pious *karma*. Now you see, you seven are brought together here; and since in your previous births, you so much teased and troubled the spirits, they paid you back in your own coins in this life."

These words restored the long memory to Dhista, who could find a corroboration of the monk's words in his previous life. This gave a mighty turn to the course of his life, which, needless to add, he made a worthy thing, and at death, attained a higher stage.

KULADHWAJA

King Sankha was the king of Ajodhya. His queen was Dharini. She gave birth to a son named Kuladhwaja who was highly obedient to his parents and bore a flawless conduct. One day, as he went to the park, he saw there seated Acharya Manatunga, surrounded by fellow monks, under the shade of a leafy tree. The prince paid him homage and obeisance and listened to his holy words wherein the Acharya revealed the virtue of a celibate life. When the sermon was over, the prince said,

"Holy sire ! A wholly celibate life is an impossibility for me ; but I take the vow to remain contended with my own wife and never to touch another woman."

As the prince was coming back, he met two ladies who were quarreling with each other. When the prince enquired about the source of trouble between them, said one,

"I am the wife of a blacksmith and my name is Saubhagya-kandali. I came here to take water from this well. As I was going back, herein came this lady named Kanak-manjari, the wife of a carpenter, with an empty jar on the same errand. It was a narrow lane and we stood face to face. Even though my jar was full and hers was empty, she didn't clear the way for me. Hence, sir, this heated exchange."

She didn't stop at that but added,

"This lady should know how great a craftsman my man is in deference to which alone she should have given me precedence. There is no art on earth of which my husband is not a master."

The prince—"Noble lady ! What's the field of thy husband's specialisation. I am curious to know about it."

"Sir, the name of my husband is Band-deva. He makes an iron fish, which floats in the air, dives in the deep sea, picks up the most precious pearls and returns to its own place."

Kanak-manjari could no longer hold her tongue.

"Is it worth calling an art ? My dear sir, a real craftsman alone knows what a true art is. This is nothing when compared with the art my husband is master of."

The prince—"Ladv ! Tender a full account of thy husband's expertise."

Displaying full pride in her husband's great merit, the second lady started her accouut :

"My husband Kandarpa is a great carpenter who makes a wooden horse, on whose back one may room in the air for six months"

The prince was highly pleased to know of the existence of such skilled craftsmen in the kingdom, and he brought it to the notice of the king, who sent for both. He offered them the necessary material, and asked them to demonstrate their skill at the court. The blacksmith produced the fish, fixed a chamber on its back and fitted two keys, and presented it to the king. The blacksmith took the king on its back to give him an aerial view of the landscape, after which it descended of the sea shore The two then entered into the chamber. The fish then went deep inside the water where it collected precious pearls at its heart's content and then it returned to the palace. As the pearls were unloaded, there were piles of them. The king was very much surprised. He asked the smith many questions, particularly on motion and rest of an iron fish, and the smith explained that he had acquired this art from a goddess, who had given him two enchanted keys which were fitted on the fish and which were instrumental in collecting so many pearls.

The carpenter now came with the wooden horse which he presented to the king, and requested him or the prince to enjoy a flight in whichever direction he pleased. The prince expressed eagerness to have it and the king agreed. To control the flying horse, the carpenter gave the prince the

"Sir ! My vow is fulfilled .

use of two keys. With the prince on its back, the horse now took off and soon disappeared in the sky. The prince was in the air for a long time and he enjoyed the flight. Then he descended in a park on the outskirts of a city. He took out the keys and lay down, using the horse for his pillow. Now, it so happened that as the horse got fixed, so did the shadow of the tree. This was soon observed by the gardener, who took the prince to be a magician. He came near him and touched his finger at the leg, and at once the prince sat up. The gardener requested the prince to accept his hospitality. The prince agreed and came to the gardener's house. The horse was placed in a corner in the room In the evening, the prince was out to take a view of the town, when he reached a temple dedicated to Muni Subrata. He bowed before the image and sat down in prayer. Just then a lady came in and she turned all men out. Kuladhwaja didn't understand the intention of the lady. So he hid in a corner and began to observe what happened next.

Soon another divine-looking damsel became visible inside, who did worship the image and left. On making enquiry about her, the prince came to know that she was Princess Sundari, whose parents were Queen Jayamala and King Vijaya of that city which was named Ratnapur The prince further learnt that the princess, though of ripe age for her marriage, was still a spinster, and was under a vow to marry a man or a *Vidyadhara* who would reach her in her own chamber at the palace.

The prince thought of trying his luck. He returned to his host's residence, made ready his horse and flew straight to the princess' window The princess was fast asleep. So he spread chewed betel leaf around her bed and came back to his residence, the gardener's house.

In the morning, when the princess woke up and saw the chewed staff, she had no doubt that this must be the doing of some *deva* or *Vidyadhara*, and he must visit her again. At night, the princess lay on her bed. The prince came, as during the previous night, and started throwing the chewed leaves. The princess at once sat up and caught the border of his cloth. The two were thus together, enjoying a conversation. The princess said,

"Sir ! My vow is fulfilled to-day. I was looking for a daring person, a hero in true sense, and you fulfil my expectation."

The two then got married in the presence of the burning lamp. The prince now came to her window everyday and the princess enjoyed his company. She was at the height of her life's joy.

A life spent in joy gives it a long span, grace and development. Already having a divine frame, her physical grace now multiplied manifold, and she showed signs of pregnancy. Her attendants noticed it and reported to the queen, and she in turn brought it to the notice of the king. The king became very angry and said,

"Whoever be the culprit, he must go to hell."

The king immediately returned to the court to decide suitable action His untimely appearance alarmed everybody, but none could muster courage to ask. At last, a lady ascertained the reason from the king and said,

"Sir ! Have patience. I shall get the culprit arrested and drag him before Your Majesty."

The lady, Bagura by name, applied her ready wit, and, with the assistance of the princess' attendants, got a sufficient quantity of vermillion powder spread on the ground round the princess' chamber. Since the whole thing was done at night and with due precaution, the prince had no inkling of it. He came as usual at mid-night and left in the early hours of the morning, with his feet reddened. In the morning, the lady came to the princess' chamber and examined the foot prints. She had no doubt now that this was a human visitor. Then with the intelligence people of the state, she started the search and before long the culprit was under arrest. He was presented to the king, who ordered his immediate execution. As the prince was being taken for execution, all people felt sympathy for him. A prince of royal blood, he bore the auspicious marks of a prospective king, and people had no doubt that the king had made a mistake by awarding him capital punishment. They further

felt that since the princess was involved, the matter should have been hushed up, instead of being given this much public exposure. Now, on his way to the execution ground, as the prince reached near the gardener's house, he said to the executioner,

"Look here, my good fellow, my family diety is enshrined here. Since these are my last moments on this earth, if you permit me, I may say my last prayer."

This was a very normal request and the executioner agreed. The prince came inside the house, made ready his horse and soon he was in the sky. He came straight to the princess' chamber, took her with him and was in the sky again. They landed near the sea-shore. By this time, the prince was very hungry So the princess said,

"My dear ! You stay here Let me return to my chamber on horse-back and get you some sweets. I shall be back in a moment."

Man proposes, but destiny proposes otherwise. The princess placed the horse at the window and went in to collect some sweets When she returned, she found the horse dashed against the ground by a gust of wind and broken into piecess. Now she knew not how to get back to the prince She started weeping and blaming her ill-luck.

When the princess returned not for a very long time, the prince became anxious on her score. Restlessly he was pacing on the sea shore. This attracted the notice of a *Vidyadhara* princess, who was flying overhead in search of her husband. She came down at once and offered to help the prince. The prince asked her who she was, wherefrom she came and whither was she going. In revealing her identity, the lady said that she was the queen of *Vidyadhara* Manichuda of the Baitadhya hills. Since her husband had been stolen by his adversaries, she was out to rescue him from their hands.

The prince accepted the offer. The lady was, however, charmed at the prince's beauty and manliness and made lusty overtures. But the prince, bound by the vow of restricted

celibacy as he was, did not respond, but told her frankly of the position. This very much annoyed the lady who picked him up at once, and threw him in the sea. There he was saved by the water goddess who was charmed at his steadfastness and helped his restoration in the princess' chamber. People in the palace soon came to know of the prince's presence there. When the king came to know the whole situation, even his anger was pacified. The king was convinced that the man courted by the princess was no ordinary person. Kuladhwaja stayed there for a few days, and then, he thought of coming back to his own city. He came back with the newly married wife to the joy of everybody. His father Sankha now abdicated in his favour and placed him on the throne. Kuladhwaja had a glorious reign in course of which he wavered not from the prescribed course of conduct, and attained, at death, a high status.

DAMANAKA

In the city of Rajpur, there lived a man named Kulaputra. Jinadasa, a Jaina *sravaka,* was his fast friend. In the company of his friend, Kulaputra came in touch with the Jaina monks and undertook the vow not to take fish.

Once a terrible famine broke out in the city and people started living on fish. Even the staunchest vegetarians changed their diet and there was hardly a household where fish was not a staple food. Now, Kulaputra's vow was on a severe trial. Said his wife to him one day,

"Don't you see, sir, there is no food even for the children and they are starving ? And yet you are so very indifferent. Won't you buy me some fish ? I cannot do without them."

Kulaputra—"You see, my dear, I have no desire to deprive other living beings of their life just to save my own. Grains are our food. I cannot extend my hands to fish. I have affection for my children, but I have a similar affection for everyone else I cannot overlook this."

Kulaputra's brother-in-law forced him to accompany him to the river bank in order to catch fish. Very reluctantly he went with him and very indifferently did he throw his net in the water. But what a wonder ! He had the largest catch. When Kulaputra saw that the aquatics were very uneasy and restless outside the water, he at once released them in the stream. He tried thrice but on each occasion the outcome was the same, and he released the aquatics into the stream on all the three occasions. Burdened with diverse thought moving up and down in his mind, he went on fast unto death and was liberated of the mortal frame. He was born in the family of a merchant named Manihar in the city of Rajagriha and was given the name Damanaka.

Manihar was a man of great wealth and fortune. But by the time Damanaka was eight years old, there broke out an epidemic in which all members of the merchant's family save

Damanaka died. He had now no guardian to look after him and the vast property took no time to disappear. At last, the orphan took shelter with another merchant, Sagarpoat by name.

One day, some monks came to Sagarpoat's house to seek food. The eldest of them, when he saw the boy, casually observed to his fellow monks that the boy's auspicious *karma* was not now very far from coming up and that eventually he would be the head of that very household.

Naturally, the observation could not be relished by the merchant, particularly so when he had a son to inherit his fortune. So at once he thought out a plan to kill him. He sent for the butcher and gave him the assignment. The butcher took the boy to a deep forest. But as he looked at his face, he took pity on him and could not withhold his disgust of the merchant who had given him a cruel assignment. He pierced Damanaka's finger, took a few drops of blood, and released him. He asked him to flee at once and never to show his face in that region.

When all alone in the forest, and deeply afflicted by terror, Damanaka met a cow-herd, who heard his account and took him home Here started a new chapter in his life. He was now assisting the cow-herd and this work he did not dislike.

Many years passed in this way and Damanaka was now a young man. One day, it so happened that the merchant Sagarpoat came to that very place on business. He saw the young man and liked him very much. He learnt on enquiry that this was an orphan whom the cow-herd had picked up from the forest years back.

The merchant had now no doubt that this was the boy whom he had himself condemned years back. His old apprehensions revived and once more he was determined to wipe him out of existence. So he requested the cowherd to lend him the service of the boy to carry an urgent message to his son.

Damanaka reached the outskirts of the city of Rajagriha with the merchant's letter in his hand. He took shelter in a temple to rest and he didn't know when he fell fast asleep. The envelop lay beside him.

Just then, the merchant's daughter Bisa came to the temple. When her eyes fell on an envelop addressed to her own brother, she couldn't check the temptation to pick it up. When she read it, she found that her brother had been commissioned by her father to administer dreadful venom to the bearer thereof as soon as he reached him.

Bisa looked at the young man and read the letter again and again looked at him. She didn't understand why her father had given such a cruel order. Now, poison is called '*bis*' in the north Indian dialects, and the girl, by a gentle stroke of the pen, changed '*bis*' into '*bisa*', which was her own name. Then she redeposited the letter from where she had picked it up and silently departed

The letter was duly delivered to the merchant's son, and the merchant's wishes were duly honoured to the very letter of the note. When the merchant returned home, he found to his greatest disgust that the young man he had condemned had turned into the next of his kin. He felt so helpless and bitter.

A minor stroke of pen thus changed into a major stroke of fortune But the merchant didn't change He was still bent on liquidating the young man, even though that would be a great misfortune for his own daughter. So he instructed some of his faithful men to be on the look-out for a suitable opportunity to liquidate him.

When the auspicious *karma* is up, what to speak of killing, none can do as much as to bend one's hair. The men were unsuccessful in their assignment.

One day, the whole family, including Damanaka, had gone to a friend's house to participate in an occasion. Damanaka returned somewhat early. But since the entrance door was locked, he lay outside on a cot Somehow he felt restless, got up and went on pacing up and down.

Meanwhile returned his brother-in law. But since the entrance was still locked, he lay on the same cot and was soon asleep. Now, the merchant's men, who were after Damanaka, had seen him lying on the cot outside, but they

did not notice him moving out and being replaced by his brother-in-law. By the time they returned with sharp weapons, the person on the cot had changed and now the most unfortunate victim of the merchant's order was none other than his own dear son.

Thus one knows not how a ditch dug for another may turn out to be a big well for the digger himself.

Having lost his only son, the merchant had now no other alternative but to change his attitude towards his son-in law. He discussed the matter with his wife and the two were unanimous that Damanaka should be entrusted with full responsibility of running the household.

Mysterious is the turn of *karma*. Damanaka who was born in a rich family, and had lost his all was again in command of a huge fortune One day, a few singers came to Damanaka's house and sang. The theme was very much in tune with the ups and downs of Damanaka's own life. Damanaka was greatly impressed and rewarded the singers.

For many years, Damanaka enjoyed the prosperity and happiness of the earthly life. Then he adopted the vows of a *sravaka* and followed them rigorously, enriching thereby his life on earth, and, at death, finding a place among the celestial beings.

ASANGMATA

King Atimardan reigned in the city of Ratnapur. His son's name was Lalitanga Lalitanga was not only a worthy son but was highly accomplished.

It was spring and people had flocked in a public park. The prince was there too, and so was the minister's young and charming wife. It was an accident that their four eyes met.

The prince sent one of his peers to enquire of the lady when he could meet her alone. The lady sent back the following message :

"Such a thing is by no means easy. My husband is so suspicious that he rarely lets me go out alone, nor does he allow anybody to come to our home. But there is one way. There is a dry well adjacent to our house. Let the prince dig a tunnel linking the well to his palace-chamber. Once this is done, I shall take opportunity to quarrel with my husband and jump into the well. I shall then take the tunnel and be with the prince. That will be, not a short meeting, but a permanent union."

The prince did accordingly. When the tunnel was ready, on an appointed day, the lady quarrelled with her husband and jumped into the well. From there, she took the tunnel and soon she was at the prince's chamber.

Now, as the lady jumped into the well, none had seen her. So there started a complete search of the city and its suburbia Even the well was not spared, but the lady was found nowhere, dead or alive. When the matter reached the ears of the king, he held the minister guilty of murdering his wife and ordered for him imprisonment for life and forfeiture of his entire property. When the prince heard of the king's order, he was afraid and mortified. He knew more

than anyone else that he had been the cause of the poor minister's fall. But more than that he was apprehensive on his own score. His entire reputation would go to mud the moment it were known that the minister's wife was the prince's concubine Thus thoroughly shaken, the prince fled the palace at once and entered into a forest, where he saw a monk, to whom he said,

"Holy sir ! I am a culprit. Can I be absolved of my guilt ?"

The monk saw a rich soul in the prince and encouraged him to join the holy order The prince agreed, and thus started a new chapter in his life.

Once Monk Lalitanga reached a park outside the city of Khsempur. There, on the bank of the river, he started *kayotsarga* Now, in the same city, there lived an atheist named Asangmata who had neither respect for parents, elders and superiors, nor faith in the sacred canons. By nature, he was very haughty

Now, it so happened that the river at that time was in spate, and the whole area was merged under deep water except the ground where stood the monk. The news took no time to reach the city and people flocked to see this wonder. Many touched his feet and many derived inspiration from his conduct.

This roused a tremendous jealousy in the atheist. Men like him are no better than flies who appreciate not the real beauty but relish sitting on the sores He at once reached the bank of the river, tied the monk with a chain, piled logs round him and set fire to them. The monk took at ease the fire-bath and the flames could do him no harm.

When, next morning, the atheist saw it with his own eyes, he was shaken to the core. He realised the great power of penance and bent his head low in reverence before the monk. There he stood, calm and fixed, reviewing within himself the whole situation. He was a wholly changed man now, changed in thought and in conduct, and the process was so quick that almost in a moment the shackles of *karma* were gone and he still stood, facing the monk, in possession of *kevala jnana*

BHIMKUMAR

King Narabahan reigned in the city of Kamalpur. His queen's name was Malati and that of his son Bhim. The prince was well known for his physical vigour One day, he saw a *muni* in the garden and sat down near him. The *muni* discovered a mature soul in the prince and revealed to him the secrets of religion. The prince felt so inspired at this that he took the vows of a *sravaka*

One day, a heretical monk of the *kapalika* order came to the prince He carried some fruits and flowers in his hand He placed them before the prince and said,

"The great do not refuse a seeker. I have come to you with a request May I hope that you will fulfil it ?"

He continued,

"It is twelve years from now as you move back in the past that I started the propitiation of an art. It will reach its completion on the next *chaturdasi* day Now, on that day, I need someone to assist me, and, in my opinion, none is more competent than you for that purpose. Hence I am here. What do you say, sir ?"

The prince was never afraid of adventures He agreed and on the appointed day, he went out with him. The minister's son, who happened to be his friend, tried to prevent him, but the prince could not be dissuaded. With an ensheathed sword in his hand, the prince reached the cremation ground The *kapalika* marked a plot for his use, propitiated the goddess and extended his hand to catch the prince's head. The prince, who was very alert, thundered at once :

"Hold apart and mind thy own business. One step more towards me, and your dead body will roll on the ground. You should know for certain that not even the *devas* are are capable of facing me."

This upset the *kapalika's* entire plan. So he thought of exerting strength, and attacked the prince with an open knife in his hand.

Kapalika—"Prince ! Remember thy diety. You didn't respond to my persuasion. So I must subdue you by force. But your head I must have. This is so essential for the propitiation of my art."

The prince laughed at him without showing any concern :

"Fool ! Only the weak have submitted to your threats. The head of a lion is never within the reach of a jackal like you."

A duel started at once. The prince gave such a severe blow on the heretic's head that he fell on the ground and the prince was on his neck. Once he thought of severing it, but the next moment he took pity on the poor soul and released him after giving a good thrashing. Once free, the ungrateful *kapalika* caught the prince unaware and hurled him in the sky The prince was at once held by a *yaksa's* wife, Kamala by name, who was at that moment flying overhead She liked him very much and brought him straight to her abode on the Vaitadhya hills.

The prince was under a vow of restricted celibacy and did not respond to the lusty overtures of the *yaksa* lady. Kamala was a good soul She appreciated the steadfastness in the prince and praised him eloquently.

When the two were in conversation, the prince heard some musical instruments being played in accompaniment with some chantings. On enquiry, the prince learnt that a few monks were there in the neighbourhood. He expressed keenness to see them. As he was escorted there, a demon made a sudden appearance and snatched away the prince's sword. The prince at once caught him and mounted on his back to bring him down. But the demon had great physical strength. With the prince on his back, he flew in the sky and landed him near a temple.

Inside the temple stood the *kapalika* holding a young man by his hairs and thundering :

"Remember your diety. These are your last moments. I shall cut your head with this sword."

Undaunted by the terrible environment, the youth was heard saying :

"I seek refuge with the Jinas who are free from lust and attachment. Bhimkumar is my saviour; I beseech refuge with him too"

At these words, the *kapanka's* rage reached its peak. He shouted,

"Mention not his name, ye wretch. He is a coward and you should be ashamed in beseeching refuge with him. Had he been really powerful, he wouldn't have hidden from my gaze."

Just then the prince made his appearance and said,

"Rascal ! Why do you kill him ?"

When *kapalika* saw Bhim, he released the young man and ran after him They caught one another and there started a deadly battle between the two. But soon the prince got the upper hand, and held the heretic against the ground, telling him,

"My dear fellow ! In your life, you have asked many to remember their diety Now it's your turn to do the same. There's none to save you."

Just then the goddess, whom the *kapalika* worshipped, came down from the image, and, addressing the prince, said,

"Prince ! I am impressed by thy courage. I beseech thee to release my devotee. Please spare his life. I am here to give you a boon"

The prince appeared at his finest at this moment. Said he,

"Goddess ! If you are really pleased with me and desire to give me a boon, then I pray you desist from this carnage from to-day on You should agree, life is dear to everybody. I beseech nothing else." The goddess agreed and disappeared.

The prince now turned to the young man and was delighted to find that it was the minister's son. He at once took him in embrace and said,

The elephant picked up the two on its back and flew away.

"My dear friend ! This heretic was no stranger to thee. How then did ye step into his trap ?"

The minister's son—"Prince ! Since you disappeared, we had a very anxious time. Searches were made everywhere and in all directions, but without result. Then the family deity was propitiated and we had it from her that you were safe and would soon return home with great laurels. Now, as I was out to hear the talk of the town about you, this scoundrel caught me and brought me here.

As the two were having a tete-a-tete, there appeared a colossal elephant With its stout trunk, it picked up the two on its back and flew away The two were placed outside a deserted city. The elephant then disappeared. Leaving the minister's son outside the city, the prince moved in. There he met a man-lion who had the face of a human being but the body of a lion He held a beautiful man between his teeth, and the man was bitterly weeping When the prince asked the animal to release the man, the animal said,

"I am very hungry for a long time. After a long gap, I have my food. How can I let it go ?"

The prince—"It appears to me, my dear fellow, that you have a fluid (*vaikriya*) body I wonder how it (the body) takes a human being as its food !"

The man-lion—"You are right, sir. But he is my inveterate enemy from the previous birth. How do you think can I release him ? I will kill him and that alone will pacify my anger."

The prince tried utmost persuasion, but when that failed, he applied force. He rescued the man from the animal's mouth, and bit the animal so severely that he fled for life.

Now, with the same vehemence, he reached the palace. There he was very cordially received by several waitresses. One produced a jar full of pure water, another washed the prince's feet, a third desired to take him to bath, a fourth offered him food and a fifth decorated him in costly robes and ornaments. The prince silently obliged all. Just then a *deva* came, and, on a point of enquiry from the prince, made the following observation :

"This city is named Kanakpur, where once reigned King Kanakrath. His priest Sudatta was a fallen man and was very much despised by the residents of this city. Since the priest would not improve, the matter was reported to the king, who severely chastised the priest. Unfortunately, the priest died of depression. That priest is now born as a demon. I am he, and sometime earlier, you saw me as a man lion. The man whom you rescued from my mouth was the king himself. But I congratulate you for your courage. It is I who arranged for your reception at the palace It is my great power again that has made the residents of this city invisible."

Just then a *kevali* arrived at the city park. The prince, the minister's son and the *deva*, all the three came to him. Even the elephant came there trumpeting wildly and dangling his trunk The *kevali* who was in the midst of his sermon, changed his topic and said,

"This elephant is really a *yaksa* who was the grand-father of King Kanakrath. He brought Bhimkumar to this place for the rescue of his grandson. As Bhimkumar has saved the king, the *yaksa* is under a debt of gratitude to him."

The elephant now changed into a *yaksa* and lent support to the words of the *kevali* The *yaksa* then turned to the prince and requested him to return to his city from which he was absent for long. His parents were very much in distress ever since his disappearance in the company of the *kapalika*. The *yaksa* even offered to help him to return.

Then at the prince's request, he built an air-chariot on which mounted the prince and the minister's son. They soon returned to their own city. The king and the queen were very happy to see their lost son. At the right moment, Bhim was placed on the throne, the king abdicating in his favour. Needless to add, Bhim had a glorious reign, and he spent his last days in the holy order of monks, attaining liberation at death.

SAGARCHANDRA

Amitchandra was the king of Malaypur. His queen's name was Chandrakala and that of his son Sagarchandra. The prince had a manly physique and was wholly undaunted of elephants and demons alike One day, while roaming in the city, he met a man with a bamboo pole in his hand, atop which there was a piece of paper, on which was scribbled something When he asked the man what it could be, he said,

"The paper has a nice couplet written on it. He who pays five hundred gold coins gets it."

The prince paid the money and bought the couplet which was as follows :

"*Without notice to living beings come pleasure and pain*
Delay not thy religious practice to tranquilise 'em"

The couplet created a stir in the prince and was henceforth uppermost in his mind

One day, some invisible power picked up the prince and dropped him into the sea. He caught a floating log and was in that state struggling for life for eight days. On the nineth day, he was washed ashore an island named Amar. Once on the shore, he rubbed himself with cocoanut water to allay his fatigue. Though alone on the island, the couplet was his companion and he did not feel stranded and lonely. His first task now was to pluck some fruits and appease his hunger. Then he started to survey the island Suddenly, he heard a lady crying at a distance and he hurried his steps in that direction. As he drew near the spot, he could distinctly hear the lady's voice,

"In my next birth, at least, I must have Sagarchandra as my husband"

The prince was surprised to hear his own name at this place. As he drew near her, he saw a lady with a loop round her neck ready to commit suicide. With a swift movement of his hand, the prince cut the loop at once.

The lady was surprised to see a human being in that situation. No less surprised was the prince himself to see a *Vidyadhara* standing in front of him. The *Vidyadhara* said,

"Sir, you have done me a lot of good by saving this lady's life."

The prince felt inquisitive about the whole drama. The *Vidyadhara* started his account to enlighten the prince :

"Sir ! In this Amar Island, there is a city named Amarpur where reigns King Bhuvanabhanu. His queen's name is Chandravadana and that of the princess Kamalamala. This young lady is the princess herself I am her maternal uncle Amitateja. On the basis of very high reports about a certain prince, Sagarchandra by name, this lady is mad after him. She is determined to marry this prince and none else. If the situation proved otherwise, she would not even hesitate to court death On the other hand, a certain *Vidyadhara*, Surasena by name, is mad after this lady. It is he who picked her up and brought her here. As he was about to apply force on her, I came here by sheer chance and knocked him out."

Meanwhile, Amitateja's wife, Vidyullata, joined them, and she at once recognised the prince :

"Why ! This is surely Sagarchandra. I know him. It cann't be a mistake I saw him on my way to the Nandisvara Island."

At the mention of the prince's name, the lady regained a new life, so to say. Right on the spot, the uncle performed the marriage of the princess with Sagarchandra.

The prince now proceeded to meet his father-in-law, King Bhuvanabhanu, at his own city. The king accorded him a ceremonial reception.

One night, as the prince lay in his bed chamber, some

invisible hand removed him, and in the morning, when the prince woke, he found himself on the top of a hill, all by himself, far away from Amarpur, he knew not where. It was indeed a cruel joke, but he remembered the couplet and was not particularly in distress. He now started getting acquainted with the new situation. Under an *asoka* tree, he saw a monk in *kayotsarga* posture, and felt enlightened and enriched from within. After the monk's meditation was over, the prince put the following question to him :

"Holy sir! How does a living being experience happiness?"

The monk made sure that the stranger was a right recipient and said,

"Religion is the surest road to happiness. What to speak of happiness, in the absence of religion, even wealth and desires do no fructify. And equanimity is the first step to religion."

Sagarchandra courted equanimity from that day. He had a few more queries for the monk, but before he could formulate them, the monk had disappeared, and he found himself encircled by a large band of soldiers. Their leader ordered :

"Hurry up. Kill this sinful man."

Sagarchandra was all alone and without any arm. He at once invoked the couplet and was all strength. At once, he jumped upon a soldier, snatched his sword and chased after the whole group Many were killed and many fled for life. They could not stand for long before a determined fighter.

Seeing the situation going out of hand, the leader, a prince himself, Samarvijaya by name, took the field.

Now, this was a duel between equals which lasted for a long time none yielding the ground. So, to change the situation, Sagarchandra invoked his special skill, which his adversary could not comprehend, and soon he was a captive in Sagarchandra's hands. Sagarchandra, however, did no disrespect to a worthy adversary, but released him with his own hands.

But one point was not clear to Sagarchandra—it was the cause of Samarvijaya's animosity for which he hunted him

Now, this was a duel between equals.

out in such a out-of-the-way place and challenged him with full force.

Just at that moment a lady appeared on the scene who threw light on the whole situation :

"King Kamalchandra of Kusalvardhana has a daughter named Bhuvanakanta. The princess has heard from some source eulogies about Sagarchandra, and she is decided to have him, and none else, as her husband, Now, at Sholapur, there is another king named Sudarsana and he has a son named Samarvijaya who stands yonder. King Sudarsana sent a request to King Kamalchandra seeking the hands of Bhuvanakanta for his son but the request has been turned down. So Samarvijaya marched on the city of Kusalvardhana. He even stole the princess, but she has escaped to this forest. I am her nurse. I have recognised you and my earnest request is that you accept her and be a source of great joy to all of us."

Samarvijaya hang down his head in shame at this double defeat Sagarchandra accepted the princess, if not for anything else, to establish his superiority and victory on his adversary. The ritual was organised by the nurse.

Now, Sagarchandra started to meet his new father-in-law. In the way, he heard music from some instruments Proceeding alone in the direction, he soon reached a mansion, at the seventh floor of which there were five damsels, who received him When Sagarchandra expressed inquisitiveness about the existence of five girls, all by themselves, in such a lonely forest, they gave the following account:

"We are, sir, Kamala, Shri, Rambha, Vimala and Tara, all daughters of a *Vidyadhara* king named Singhanada at the Vaitadhya hills Once an astrologer had made a forecast telling our father that a prince named Sagarchandra, the son of King Amitchandra would husband us, and that he would come of himself to this forest without our seeking. So our father has built this mansion, and we are waiting here for the arrival of our man.

Sagarchandra remembered the couplet. Since destiny had allotted these girls to him, he accepted them.

And what happened next ?

In the twinkling of an eye, everything disappeared, the girls and the mansion, and the prince stood all alone. He returned to the place where he had left Bhuvanakanta, but even she was not there. The whole thing appeared like a magic and the prince knew not what to make of it.

It was now useless to waste his time there. So the prince sat down to rest and to concentrate on the couplet.

The temple became the venue of two very happy meetings.

King Sudharma of Mangalpuri came there with his daughter to offer her to the prince as per a previous forecast. The king knew beforehand that he would meet the prince in the temple.

King Singhanada came with his five daughters. As the *Vidyadhara* king revealed, soon after their marriage with Sagarchandra, they were stolen by a prince name Utpala, son of a certain king named Amitateja, from whom they had been just rescued by the father. The *Vidyadhara* king further revealed that the prince's first wife, Bhuvanakanta, whom he had left in the forest, had been carried away by Kamal, who happened to be Utpal's brother, and that at that moment, she was on the Vaitadhya hills struggling to protect herself from the rogue.

Now, the prince's first duty was to rescue Bhuvanakanta. His father-in-law Singhanada equipped him with special powers that might be of help to the prince in the ensuing encounter. Bhuvanakanta was duly rescued, and in the company of all his wives, the prince returned to his city, to the great joy of his parents and his people.

One day, Kevali Bhuvanananda came to the city. King Amitchandra and Prince Sagarchandra came to see him. After the sermon the king made the following submission to the Kevali :

"Holy sire ! We do not know yet how and by whom my son was picked up and dropped into the sea, and why ?"

Throwing light on the past, the Kevali said :

"Oh king ! It is a long story, In Mahavideha, there lived a merchant who had two sons, both being highly accomplished. One day, the elder brother went abroad on business. During his absence, the younger one told his sister-in-law in joke one day that his brother had been murdered by robbers. This was a great shock to the lady who died of a broken heart At this unexpected incident, the younger brother became heartily sorry.

"When the elder brother returned and came to know of his brother's hand in the premature death of his wife, he became very angry with his brother, and no amount of regret by the latter was able to pacify him. The elder then joined the order of heretical monks, and at death, was born as an Asurakumara. The younger joined the Jaina holy order.

"The elder, now an Asurakumara, came to the younger one day to take revenge. He picked him up and dashed him against a rock, killing him on the spot. He earned a heavenly life, and is now born as your son, Prince Sagarchandra.

"The Asurakumara is still after his younger brother. It is he who picked up Sagarchandra and dropped him in the sea He is not pacified yet and is likely to cause further troubles, but at no time now he will be able to overpower the prince "

This revelation of the past gave enlightenment to the royal couple and the prince, all three of whom were initiated into the holy order Deeply impressed by the great power of the couplet in his possession that always stood by him at the most difficult moments of life, as a monk Sagarchandra now turned to the holy texts and soon mastered them. Later, he headed the order. Knowing his last moment not very far, Sagarchandra courted fast unto death and sat in deep meditation. At this moment, the Asurakumara caused him great affliction which he bore unconcerned. In this state, at a very supreme moment, he acquired the knowledge of the free, and entered into liberation, the most coveted state, wherefrom there is no gliding back and forth by the soul in the cycle of life and death.

GLOSSARY

Adinatha Risabha—The first *tirthankara* of the Jaina order who was not only the first monarch on earth, but was first in all respects because of which he is called Adinatha or Lo-d of Genesis. He taught men arts and crafts, and gave them the first Canons and the Brahmi script.

Acharya—Head of the holy order of the Jainas.

Asana-pana-khadim-swadim—Four food-items as follows :

(i) cereals that constitute the principal meal ;

(ii) all drinks ;

(iii) fruits ; and

(iv) betel, chewing spices taken after meal, jaggery, honey, etc.

Ahimsa—Non-injury, non-slaughter, by words, mind and deeds. This is the first principal vow of Jaina religion. In its broad connotation, it covers the remaining four vows of non-lie, non-sex, non-theft, non-possession.

Adattadana—See *Vratas*

Arihanta—*Jina*, literally, conqueror of inner enemies, like passion, hatred, greed, attachment, etc.

Asrava—See *Navatattva.*

Asurakumaras—A species of peripatetic celestial beings. See *Devas.*

Avadhi-jnana—See *Jnana.*

Bhante—A form of address inviting the attention of the *Acharya*, Sanskrit *bhadanta*, *bhavanta*, *bhayanta*, i.e., one who helps end transmigration, etc.

Bharanda bird—A giant-sized bird with two mouths and one belly. Traders used to go to the Valley of Diamonds with their help. These birds have been praised in the Jaina literature for their extreme steadfastness.

Brahma— A god of Hindu mythology linked with creation.

Byantara—See *Deva*.

Chaitra—Name of a month in the Indian calendar, extending roughly from the middle of March to the middle of April.

Chaturdasi—Fourteenth day of the fortnight in the month. It is a very special day in the Jaina life for fasting and other penances.

Deva—A celestial being. There are four broad categories of celestial beings as follows :

(1) Bhavanapatis (residential), (2) Byantaras (Peripatetic) (3) Jyotiskas (stellar bodies) and (4) Vaimanikas (heavenly bodies.)

The following are the Bhavanapati *devas* :

Asurakumaras, Nagakumaras, Vidyutkumaras, Suparnakumaras, Agnikumaras, Vatakumaras, Stanitkumaras, Udadhikumaras, Dwipkumaras and Dikkumaras

The following are the Byantara *devas* :

Kinnaras, Kimpurusas, Moharagas, Gandharvas, Yaksas, Raksasas, Bhutas and Pisachas.

Jyotiska *devas* include the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, etc,

Vaimanikas are of two types : Kalpotpannas and Kalpatitas. The former live in heavens just above the Jyotiska *devas* and the latter live farther beyond

Bhavanapatis and Byantaras live just above or below the earth.

Dharma—Law, religion Technically, the Jainas have used the term to signify 'motion', as *adharma* signifies 'rest'.

Dharma-dhyana—Meditating on spiritual objects, like the words of the *tirthankaras*, images of the *tirthankaras*, etc. The Jainas have conceived four types of meditation, of which two are common to all worldly beings and two are followed by those who are on the spiritual path. They are :

(1) *Arta-dhyana* which is meditating on earthly objects for one's own happiness ;

(2) *Raudra-dhyana* which is meditating on doing harm to another or others for one's own happiness ;

(3) *Dharma-dhyana* as above ; and

(4) *Sukla-dhyana* which is meditating on one's own self.

Dig-virati—See *Dikparimana* under *Vratas*.

Gandharva marriage—One of the eight forms of marriage in vogue in ancient India, in which, without the consent of their parents and the elders, a boy and a girl got married by a simple exchange of garlands.

Jnana—Knowledge. The Jainas have conceived five kinds of knowledge as follows :

(1) *Mati* or ordinary cognition by the sense organs and the mind ,

(2) *Sruta* or knowledge derived with the help of signs, symbols, or words (expressions) ;

(3) *Avadhi* or direct knowledge of corporeal things without the help of the sense organs and the mind, but within some limit of space and time ,

(4) *Manahparyaya* or direct knowledge of the thought of others without the help of the sense organs and the mind, but within some limit of space and time ;

(5) *Kevala* or knowledge which completely reveals, without any limitation of space and time, the truth about all things in the universe, corporeal as well as non-corporeal, with all their attributes and modifications, past, present and future.

Kalpas—Heavens According to the Jainas, there are 12 or 16 *kalpas* as follows :

Saudharma & Aisana (paired)

Sanatkumara & Mahendra (paired)

Above them, in the centre, one above another, are :

Brahmaloka

Lantaka

Mahasukra

Sahasrara

And then, above them, in pairs again :

Anata & Pranata

Arana & Achyuta

The Digambaras add Brahmottara before Lantaka, Kapistha and Sukra before Mahasukra, and Satara before Sahasrara making a total of 16.

Kalpa tree—It was a variety of flora, now wholly extinct, which supplied everyday requirements of human beings, subsistence in particular, before they devised various arts and crafts.

Karma—It is a substantive force, matter in very subtle form. These matter-particles called *pudgalas* fill all cosmic space. The soul, by its communication with the outer world, becomes literally penetrated with by these matter-particles These in turn become *karma*, and build up a special body called *karman sarira*, which does not leave the soul till its final liberation. *Karma* works in such a way that every action leaves a mark of its own which is retained and built in into the organism to serve as the basis of future action.

Kopalika—A sect of heretical monks in the Sakti cult prevalent all over India at one time The kapalika mode of propitiation, is not very dominant now, though there are many Saktas in India to this day They usually believe in animal slaughter.

Kayotsarga—A standing posture of meditation, peculiar to the Jaina monks Literally, it means giving up (attachment to) the body.

Kesariya modaka—A sweet prepared from wheat flour, sugar and clarified butter called *ghee* with sufficient addition of saffron to impart colour and flavour

Kevala jnana—See Jnana

Kinnara—See *Deva*

Muni—A Jaina monk, literally, one who keeps control of the tongue, vow of non-speaking.

Muni Subrata—Twentieth *tirthankara* of the Jainas.

Nandana-vana—A forest, well-known for its beauty, said to be located somewhere between Mount Meru and Devakuru

Narakas—Hells. As per the Jaina view of cosmos, there are seven hells as follows :

(1) Ratnaprabha
(2) Sarkaraprabha
(3) Valukaprabha
(4) Pankaprabha
(5) Dhumaprabha
(6) Tamahprabha
(7) Mahatamahprabha

Navakara, namokara, or simply *namaskara*—This is the core *mantra* of the Jainas, if it can be called by that name. Translated into English, it's only an obeisance to the five agents of well-being, called *pancha-paramesthi*, as follows :

obeisance to the *arihantas* (*Jinas*, victors)
obeisance to the *siddhas* (liberated souls)
obeisance to the *acharya* (spiritual head)
obeisance to the *udadhyayas* (religious preceptors)
obeisance to the *sadhus* (monks)
in all the *lokas* (worlds)

Navatattva— Nine fundamental principles of Jainism A precise knowledge about these is essential for the liberation of the soul which is in bondage. These are :

(1 *Jiva* (souls)

(2) *Ajiva* (non-living substances) In this group are *dharma* (motion), *adharma* (rest), *akasa* (space), *kala* (time) and *pudgala* (matter-particles).

(3) *Asrava* (influx of *karma* in the form of matter-particles which stick to the soul spaces and act as fetters

(4) *Bandha* (bondage)
(5) *Punya* (virtue).
(6) *Papa* (vice)
(7) *Samvara* (arresting *karma* influx).
(8) *Nirjara* (exhausting accumulated *karma*).
(9) *Moksa* (liberation, which takes place when the soul is liberated, perfected and enlightened because of the total release from the clutches of matter-particles).

These nine can be reduced to two, *jiva* and *ajiva*, which are the very basic of basic principles Others simply help to understand the process of *karma* bondage till liberation.

Pausadha—See *Vrata*

Pratikramana—A confession for lapses, omissions and commissions to himself. This is to be done daily, fortnightly and yearly.

Samayika—See *Vrata*

Sasan-devi—Attending deity of the *tirthankaras* These have male counterparts too, called Sasan deva They are also called *yaksa* and *yaksini*. Since the *tirthankaras* are free from attachment (*vitaraga*), they do not help their devotees. It is from the attending deity that the devotee receives help

Saudharma loka—See *Kalpas*.

Siddhas—Liberated souls who reside in the top-most region of the spheres called Siddhasila

Sravaka, sravika—Lay follower of the Jaina order, male and female They are required to observe 12 vows (see vows) in order to be so called. Mere birth in a Jaina household does not entitle one to be called a *sravaka* or *sravika* unless he/she fulfils the 12 vows

Sresthi—A merchant, literally, the best (among men). Merchants were so designated in India because of the valuable service they could render to the society by dint of their wealth holding

Sulsa—A famous *sravika* of the time of Mahavira. . She was the wife of a chatiot driver named Naga who was related to King Prasenajit At first, she had no son Later 32 sons were born to her, all with the same life-span They were in the service of King Srenika of Rajagriha. Lord Mahavira praised this lady for her devotion and steadfastness.

Svadhyaya—To ruminate on the lessons received from the spiritual preceptor (*upadhyaya*)

Talaputa—A species of snake which is extremely venomous.

Tirthankara—Founder of the Jaina order. *Tirtha* means order, which is four-fold, consisting of the monks, nuns,

lay-followers male as well as female. In the present time-cycle, as conceived by the Jainas, there have in all been 24 *tirthankaras* headed by Adinatha Risabha The last three, Aristanemi, a contemporary of Krisna of the line of Yadu, Parsva, a prince from Kasi, and Mahavira, the senior contemporary of Gautama Buddha, are historical persons.

Upadhyaya—Spiritual preceptor who teaches holy texts.

Vaikriya (*sarira*)—Fluid (body). Other four body forms are (1) *audarika* (gross), (2) *aharaka* (assimilative) (3) *taijasa* (caloric) and (4) *karman* (made of *karma* particles.)

Vidyadhara— A species of human beings. They were so called because they were in possession of certain *vidyas* e g , flying through the sky, which were bestowed on them by the first *tirthankara* Risabha.

Vratas—Vows Five Great Vows (*mahavratas*) are

(1) *Ahimsa* (to kill not)

(2) *Amrisa* (to tell not a lie)

(3) *Achaurya* (to steal not)

(4) *Amaithuna* (to indulge not in sex behaviour)

(5) *Aparigraha* (to have no attachment/possession)

These are to be followed in their most rigorous form, and without lapse, by the monks and nuns. The same five, when prescribed for members of the lay order male as well as female become somewhat lenient, when they are called Lesser Vows (*anuvratas*) and then they take the following names :

(1) *Pranatipata viramana* (to desist from killing)

(2) *Mirsavada viramana* (to desist from telling a lie)

(3) *Adattadana viramana* (to accept not when not rightly bestowed)

(4) *Maithuna viramana* (to desist from sex behaviour)

(5) *Parigraha parimana* (to fix the size of acquisition).

To illustrate, a householder is permitted to cook food even though this may mean some slaughter of minute animals. A householder is permitted to indulge in sex behaviour with his wife, but not with any other woman. And so on. This

is a restricted form of the vow for the layfollowers, consistent with the fulfilment of their responsiblity as householders. But to atone for these relaxations, seven more vows have been added for the followers as follows :

(1) *Bhogopabhoga parimana* or limiting objects to be used.

(2) *Dik parimana* or limiting the sphere/direction of movement.

(3) *Anartha-danda viramana* or not to indulge in sinful acts not necessary for one's own or family maintenance.

(4) *Samayika* or concentrating for a duration of 48 minutes on spiritual themes, which may be repeated several times a day.

(5) *Desavahasika* or setting new limits everyday within the limits already imposed, thereby restricting further and further one's free life.

(6) *Pausadha* or living for a day like a monk, or even for a day and night, raising the restricted vow to the level of total vows

(7) *Atithi-sambibhaga* or serving monks, nuns and other deserving guests

Of these seven, the first three are called *guna-vratas* because they intensify five *anuvratas*, and the last four are *siksavratas*, because they are preliminary disciplines for entering into the life of a monk.

Apart from observing the five Great Vows, the monks are required to practise ten 'virtues', specifically mentioned, and practise elaborate meditation

Yaksa— A species of peripatetic celestial being residing on the uppermost strata of the Ratnaprabha hell, just bordering the earth.

Yojana—About 8 English miles 2 miles make one *kosa*, and 4 *kosas* make one *yojana*.

VOLUME III

1. SURASUNDARI

In the city of Champa, there reigned a king named Aridamana. Ratisundari was the name of the queen. A daughter was born to them She was so beautiful that she was named Surasundari When she reached the age of seven, the king sent her to the preceptor's school for study. She was very intelligent and had a strong memory She could remember anything only by hearing it once

In those days, a very rich merchant named Dhanapala lived in the same city. His business was not limited to his own city only , it was spread over lands far and near, even beyond the seas In fact, he had become very famous as a merchant His wife was named Dhanavati They had affluence of wealth and influence but something was missing which made the couple very miserable They had no son. At last, however, after a few years, their source of misery was removed A luminous son was born to them He was named Amarkumar When he was eight years, old, the merchant sent him for study to that very school where Surasundari studied Amarkumar too was very brilliant in his studies Any lesson uttered once by the preceptor was immediately picked up by the boy. Within a short time, he acquired all the 72 arts

Once the preceptor went out for a few days on an urgent business and he placed Amarkumar in charge of the school to look after both the boys' and the girls' sections during his absence One day, Amarkumar was out for his daily inspection during the midday recess in the company of a friend At this time, Surasundari, who had a heavy stomach that day, felt sleepy and she lay down on a bench in the class room and was soon fast asleep When Amarkumar reached the spot, he looked at her, and suddenly he saw that something was tied at the corner of her *sari* Just out of curiosity, he opend it and there came out seven shells.

Amarkumar gave them to his friend and asked him to buy some sweets against them His friend did accordingly. Then the two friends ate a portion of the sweet, and gave the remaining portion to the girl when she woke up She immediately asked, "Where did you get the money ?"

"These sweets have been bought out of the seven shells tied in your *sari* "

Surasundari became very angry She exclaimed in anger,

"In the preceptor's absence, you are doing everything all right But how could you do such a thing without my consent. Wherefrom have you learnt such manners ?"

Amarkumar felt small and said,

"I have taken such a meagre amount ! Why are you abusing me for that ? Of what great use would have been those shells to you ? You could not buy anything in exchange for them "

Surasundari promptly retorted,

"I could have purchased even a kingdom in exchange for them How are you concerned about that ?"

Amarkumar held a tight rein over his temper He did not protest For, he considered it wise not to open his lips any further but the rude words of the princess pierced his heart He said to himself,

"So that's it ! All right At the right moment, I shall see how she gets a kingdom in exchange for seven shells "

He left the place.

After a few days, the preceptor returned. When the course of study came to an end, all the students sat for the

final examination. Amarkumar stood first among the boys and Surasundari among the girls

Surasundari was no longer a little girl, she had become a young damsel. The king was now anxious to get her married to a suitable groom So he sent his men to find out a suitable match, but nowhere could such a person be found The king grew worried. He called his family preceptor and asked for his advice The preceptor said,

"Oh king ! You have misconstrued the term 'suitable' To me he who is intelligent and virtuous, who has mastered 72 arts, and who can properly guide his family, is to be deemed a suitable groom. To such a person, wealth and fame are sure to come"

At these words, the king remoulded his thoughts He began to think of the high families in his own kingdom Suddenly Amarkumar came up in his mind. He asked the preceptor about him as a groom The preceptor said,

"I have taught both and I know well their nature. There is a great similarity and common ground between them I believe, if married, they will be the happiest couple on earth "

The king now took a final decision. One say he invited both Amarkumar and Surasundari to his court The preceptor and many leading citizens were present there The king told Amarkumar and the princess to put questions to each other, and later he himself asked a few questions to each Their performance satisfied all who were present there The king sent for the merchant Dhanapal, father of Amarkumar, and made to him a formal proposal The merchant was very happy at this proposal and he readily agreed Amarkumar and Surasundari were married on an auspicious day.

The couple led a very happy conjugal life They loved each other very intensely. After some time, Amarkumar decided to undertake a sea voyage for business purposes. Accordingly, he took his father's consent When Surasundari came to know of this plan, she also desired to go with him In fact, Amarkumar did not very much like this idea, but he could not bypass her pressing request. After taking the blessings of his parents and other senior members in the family, the couple started at an auspicious moment. A few months' voyage took them to the island of Ceylon The ship was anchored for getting drinking water Just then an elderly and experienced sailor came and said,

"Wait for some time At the hour of sunset, a terrible monster comes to this place and it is very difficult to escape from his clutches If you want to save yourself, you ought to leave your ship here and move away to a distance till it's dark"

All the passengers did as bade by the sailor They dispersed in small groups Amarkumar and Surasundari walked away to another direction They were immensely pleased at the beautiful landscape facing their eyes They strolled for quite some time on the sea-beach At last Surasundari felt tired So she begged her husband to sit down somewhere and take rest Amarkumar readily agreed They selected a nice lonely spot beneath a tree. Surasundari was so tired that she placed her head on the lap of her husband and soon fell fast asleep

Human memory is very alert Sometimes words said long ago come up in memory quite amazingly, and fill the mind with unspeakable grief The same happened with the hero of the present story The stillness of the atmosphere all around and the sleeping beauty lying in front of him aroused in his mind an episode that had happened long ago.

Surasundari had said to him once in a proud voice, 'I could have purchased even a kingdom with the shells. How are you concerned about that ?' The voice was still ringing in his ears till his love for his wife turned into a feeling of hatred He tied seven coins at the corner of her *sari* and also a message as follows

'I hope, you will now avail this opportunity to get a kingdom in exchange for these shells'

Then he left Surasundari under the tree and returned to the ship When the fellow passengers asked him about his wife, moaningly he said that a monster had overpowered him and devoured his wife The passengers consoled him for this tragic loss and the ship sailed onwards

When Surasundari woke up, it was quite late at night She was surprised to find herself alone in that dense forest Amarkumar was nowhere near her. She started searching for him, but all in vain. Then fear creeped into her and she shuddered to think that her husband might have abandoned her for ever. But she just couldn't comprehend the reason for this cruel behaviour 'Why at all should he be cruel unto me when I had loved him so dearly and he too seemed to be a very loving husband,' thought she She was now in deep misery All on a sudden, the knot at one end of the *sari* attracted her attention She opened it hastily, and in the increasing darkness of the night could read with great difficulty the following words ·

"I hope, you will now avail this opportunity to get a kingdom in exchange for these shells "

The earth seemed to slip from beneath her feet The entire episode of the student days long buried in the past again revived in her memory. That Amarkumar had taken an apt revenge was clear enough But what was she to do

now in such a dense forest ? Where should she go ? Tears filled her eyes and she wept bitterly But soon she recovered her strength Tears wont help in this trying situation She carefully tied the shells at the corner of her *sari* and uttered the *namokar* with all concentration she could command

Suddenly a thundering sound came from a nearby mountain She had never had an experience of such a terrible sound She was trembling As she looked in the direction from which the sound came, she saw a terrific monster standing before her Surasundari was very much afraid at this sight, but she did not lose her head On the contrary, she began to utter the *namokar* all the more loudly The monster seemed to be charmed at her beauty, and his furious face softened to a great extent In a mild tone he asked her,

"Who are you, my child ? How did you come alone in this dense forest ?"

By this time, Surasundari had regained her courage and understood that she had nothing to fear from him So she gave him a full account of herself The monster felt for her and asked her to live there as long as she liked, since, he added, he was the protector-master of the forest and would give her his full protection Surasundari accepted his protection and lived in a cave with a complete sense of security

One day, a ship anchored there to get some drinking water It belonged to a merchant All the passengers including the senior-most partner of the merchant began to walk on the sea-shore enjoying the natural beauty of the place Somehow, the partner merchant reached a dense part of the forest and suddenly beheld Surasundari He was amazed to see such a rare beauty in a forlorn place like this.

Taking her to be a forest deity, he bowed to her. Surasundari said,

"Sir! You are mistaken. I am not a deity but an ordinary mortal, an unfortunate woman, who is passing her days here."

Then she gave a complete account of herself and explained why she was staying in the forest If the merchant had no objection, then, she expressed a desire to accompany him in his ship which might help her in the quest for her husband But she demanded an assurance that her chastity must be respected and protected The merchant agreed on her condition Surasundari was now on board the ship. The ship set sail

But the merchant could not for long remain true to his promise Whenever he saw her, he felt a lust for her Now and then he began to make overtures to her At first, Surasundari could not comprehend his feelings, but after some time, she knew what he meant, and at once she realised the danger she was in She was a spirited lady. One day, in a strong tone, she turned down his proposal and asked him to behave properly in future But the merchant was blind with lust He reminded her that he was far more powerful than she, and he would be obliged to use force provided she was so very stubborn He made it clear one day that that was the only reason why he had agreed to take her in the ship, and that if she would not listen to him, then, necessary consequences would follow

Surasundari cast a deep sigh Said she,

' I value may chastity more than even an empire of a *chakravartin* I can hold mayself against any person's lusty overtures I warn you for the future. You should know for certain that I am prepared to die rather than court another man's company "

Surasundari was now clear about her own dark prospects in the ship She looked at the vast ocean Its water was calm It was attracting her to hide her purity beneath the waves. She uttered the *namokar* and gave a deep plunge into the ocean The merchant raised an alarm and asked the men of the crew to jump after her and rescue her, but none had the courage to risk his life

So long as Surasundari was on board the ship, she was a great protection for the passengers and the crew as also for herself by dint of her great purity But no sooner had she disappeared in the waves, her protection was no longer there A great storm raged on the sea in which the ship was lost after a few violent tosses Not a single life could escape The ship itself had broken into pieces and the logs were afloat on the waves One such huge log reached Surasundari, and she held it fast and kept afloat, leaving herself to the course of her destiny After being tossed for a long time, she could feel the land beneath her feet She was so exhausted that no sooner did she reach the shore than she fell down senseless This happened to be a port named Venatat and there were many people on the shore At once they flocked to help the lady who had been carried to the shore by the waves

As she regained her sense, she found herself surrounded by strangers who had helped her in her difficulty Now that she was restored to consciousness, they enquired all about her. As she was about to give them an account of herself something strange happened in that town An elephant had broken loose from its enclosure and was running about helter-skelter all over the city He was now approaching the port People ran away in great confusion As the elephant's eyes fell on Surasundari, he picked her up in the trunk and threw her high up into the sky Surasundari was very much alarmed and began to shout for help As luck would have it, a ship was sailing on the sea. Surasundari

The elephant picked her up in the trunk and threw her in the sky.

dropped into it The master of the crew saw her and was charmed at her beauty He proposed to marry her. Surasundari made it clear to him that this was not possible under any circumstance.

The sailor believed in her story and assured her not to trouble any more But he was greedy of money and he thought that she would fetch him a large amount if she was sold to some prostitute When the ship reached the next port, he took her to a prostitute who gave him ample wealth in exchange for such a beautiful woman

Now, the prostitute came to Surasundari to teach her the ins and outs of her profession Surasundari said to herself, 'What an ill-luck ! Where have I arrived ' But she was helpless She handled the situation carefully and said, "I am under a vow for three days If you spare me for this period, I shall abide by your instructions "

The prostitute agreed

Surasundari was now looking for an opportunity to flee from there

Next day, the prostitute went to the king's palace on a special invitation Other women in the house were busy with their own affairs Surasundari availed of this opportunity and crept out of her prison At a hurried pace, she came to the sea-shore and decided to put an end to this uncertain life With her eyes closed, she uttered the *namokar* and jumped into the sea.

As she fell, she was swallowed by a big fish But the fish was caught in a fisherman's net The fish was very heavy too The fisherman was happy with this big catch Quickly he brought it home and cut it across the belly Out came a charming lady. But she was senseless The fisherman nursed her and she recovered

The fisherman was aware of the fact that the king was the legal and natural owner of every best find in his kingdom So he took Surasundari along with him and presented her to the king The king was puzzled at her beauty and sent her at once to the harem. He had intention to make her the first queen

When the first queen saw her, she was not only jealous of her, but was apprehensive of her own future in the harem. So she talked to the lady with a view to ascertain her own intentions When she found that she was keen to go away, she made arrangements secretly to send her out of the palace

Surasundari was wondering if her ill-luck would ever end. She felt that even death had become averse to her She reached a dense forest She moved forward. She was very sad and was thinking about her misfortune How long was she to run about like a fugitive ? As she was proceeding in this pensive mood, she had not noticed that a thief was already following her Now he came and stood before her. At first, he had thought of stealing her ornaments and letting her alone , but when he saw her, he changed his mind and desired her to be his wife She refused, only begging his protection But the thief did not change his mind. He rebuked her bitterly and even raised his sword to kill her Surasundari's only succour was the holy *namokar* Strangely, the raised hands of the thief became stiff Despite all efforts, they did not bend. The sword dropped from his hands. This awakened his conscience, and he realised that the lady before him was no ordinary person He realised further that if he misbehaved towards such a person, he would be in great difficulty So he begged to be forgiven and let her go wherever she pleased.

Again Surasundari continued her journey After walking for quite sometime, she reached a pond. The water of the

pond was very cool and sweet Surasundari drank it A gentle breeze was blowing Tired as she was after a long journey, she lay down on the bank of the pond, and soon fell fast asleeep

At that time, a *garuda* bird was flying in the sky As he looked down, he saw Surasundari lying on the ground He thought that she was dead He swooped down upon her, picked her up in his beak and flew away. At this disturbance, Surasundari woke up When the *garuda* realised that this was not a dead thing, he dropped her

But luck again saved her She dropped in the chariot of a *vidyadhara* who was flying at that moment When the *vidyadhara* saw a lady suddenly coming into his chariot at such an altitude he was surprised and asked her who she was and how she chanced to be there After Surasundari had explained her situation, the *vidyadhara* treater her like his own sister and asked her to accompany him She was readv, but she wanted to pay homage and obeisance to some Jaina monk

The *vidyadhara* agreed and both arrived at the Nandisvara island There she met a monk named Jnani who revealed that Surasundari would meet with her husband at Benatat

Surasundari came to live at the house of the *vidyadhara* He had four wives They received Surasundari with all the warmth and treated her as their own sister Every day they sat together and merrily spent their time

Elsewhere, Amarkumar travelled to various places in the course of his business trips and at last he came to Venatat He saw the king and presented him with valuable gifts The king was pleased with him He permitted him to carry on his business in the city. One day, as Amarkumar was talking with fellow merchants in the market place, a few guards suddenly came to him and put him under arrest.

Handcuffs were put on his hands and he was produced before a customs officer named Bimalabahana.

Amarkumar became puzzled at this unforeseen trouble. This was none of his own creation and yet he was produced as a criminal Who knew what lay ahead for him ? One day, he had cheated his wife and now he was repaid in his own coins by his own destiny Who knew where was Surasundari and in what state ? Why at all did that mischief enter into his mind on that cursed day ? All these thoughts were now killing him. At the same time the customs officer overloaded him with a volley of questions He tried his best to answer but all was in vain Before the ready wit of Bimalabahana Amarkumar could not stand. He, however, fervently pleaded his innocence and prayed to be freed At first, Bimalabahana did not agree, but at last, he set a condition ' If you can rub three pounds of clarified butter on my shoes, then I let you go unscathed "

Being the son of a wealthy merchant and himself a rich man, Amarkumar was never used to hard work But it was a desperate situation He rubbed hard for about three or four hours but not even half a pound of the clarified butter was used up Meanwhile Bimalabahan's eyelids drooped and Amarkumar considered it wise to avail of this opportunity He held up the cup and began to drink from it swiftly Suddenly, Bimalabahana opened his eyes and caught him red-handed in this misdeed Amarkumar had nothing to say in his defence. Pleading guilty he said,

' Sir ! I am not used to this sort of work in my life So you can easily realise how I can do this "

Bimalabahana seemed to take some pity on him He said, "Merchant ! Will you tell me frankly who you are, wherefrom you have come, and why you wear such a sorrowful countenance." Without suppressing anything,

Amarkumar told him everything about his own life Concluding he added.

"You see, I have never deceived anyone in my life, but I have done the vilest thing. I have deceived my own wife. At that time, I took it only as a fun and a very light sort of revenge, but I never dreamt that I shall lose her for good Now I realise that the fun has turned into a curse. I have lost an ideal wife by my own folly. I shall never find her equal in any birth "

Bimalabahana became very grave and said, "Suppose she is still alive "

With a sigh of great disappointment, Amarkumar said,

"I don't think she is I gave her up in a dense forest, and she must have right then been devoured by some monster "

Bimalakumar smiled and said,

"I tell you, she is still alive If you so desire, I can help you to meet her "

Amarkumar's face started beaming with joy He eould hardly utter a word But his silence was revealing Bimalabahana took him to an inside chamber where he was to wait. He himself went further in. After a few minutes, he saw Surasundari standing before him Suddenly he spoke out,

"Are you my dear wife Surasundari ?"

"Yes, sir, I am Surasundari, the daughter of King Aridamana "

Amarkumar could not still believe his eyes He said,

"Is it a dream or a reality ? How could you come here ? How could a wretched man like me be so fortunate as to recover a lost treasure ?"

Then Surasundari described the chain of events upto the day when she came to live at the *vidyadhara's* place and added,

"For many days, I lived there happily. But I wanted to meet you Then I divulged my mind one day to the *vidyadhara* and acquired from him the power to transform. Then the *vidyadhara* left me at the park in Benatat There I changed myself into a man Then I went to a gardener and lived with him for quite some time. I gave him enough money so that he had no reason to be dissatisfied. One day, it occured to me that I should attain fame by performing some wonderful deeds I discovered a new method of treatment for malaria It was not an usual drug to be taken orally, but a hand-fan made from herbs which cured the fever The price was fixed at one lakh and twenty-five thousand But it did not sell It appeared to be too costly "

She continued,

"Now it so happened that the son of a big merchant in the city was suffering from the same disease Best doctors were called in but they could not cure him At last, somebody brought the news about this magic fan to the merchant As a last chance, he bought the fan and fanned his son with it The boy was cured The merchant was highly pleased and presented the fan to the king The king was amazed to learn about its utility, and he desired that the producer of this wonderful thing should be brought to the court. This is how I got my introduction at the court To reward my merit, the king desired to bestow some gift. I asked for the post of a customs-officer, because as the customs-officer, I thought, it would be easy for me to detect every ship that came to this port, and thus find you out some day "

Throwing light on her other achievements, she said,

"Once a band of thieves came to the city. All efforts on the part of the police to catch them failed. One day, they looted the king's treasury and removed a huge quantity of gold and ornaments The king was very much worried.

Horsemen were despatched to pursue the thieves They searched all corners of the kingdom, but the thieves could not be traced At last, the king announced a reward of half the kingdom and the princess' hand to one who would be able to catch the thief, or give a clue to their hiding place

"When I heard about the announcement, I made use of my power to attract and this brought the thieves at once in my presence I handed them over to the guardians of law and order The king was highly pleased He gave me half the kingdom and his daughter's hand "

Jokingly, Amarkumar asked,

"And you married the princess ?"

"Why not ? I was not a fool to let go the chance "

She pointed to a room inside where the princess was and gestured to her At once she joined with them and saluted Amarkumar

Surasundari said

'So you see what I said in my student days has turned into a reality For seven shells, I have acquired a kingdom and a princess too Now you please marry her and look after the affairs of the state "

An unexpected meeting after a separation becomes the source of the greatest joy This meeting between Surasundari and Amarkumar brought immense joy to both When the king heard about it he became very happy Princess Gunamanjari was married with Amarkumar

After spending some time at Benatat, Amarkumar decided to return home to his parents With his two wives and a huge wealth he came back to the city of Champa. His parents were overjoyed to see him after such a long time All relatives and friends were happy

Once a wise monk came to Champa His words created inspiration for Amarkumar, Surasundari and Gunamanjari to join the holy order In the holy order, they practised diverse penances and made a great progress towards liberation

2. MRIGASUNDARI

King Chandrasekhara reigned in the city of Virpur. Chandrakanta was his queen and Gunekar the minister. The king had high regard for public opinion. So at night, he used to wander in disguise This kept him well posted with the people's needs and grievances, and helped him to take necessary measures This also made him popular and highly respected One night, as he was on his usual rounds, he heard people at several places saying "The king has been a very able administrator, but as he has no son to succeed him, what will happen to us after him ?"

This created a concern in the king's mind about the future of his kingdom and he returned to the palace. When the queen enquired about the cause of his gloom, he kept silent since he did not want to cause her any pain. But he could not remain silent for long and shared his concern with the queen The queen too shared in the king' concern and said

"My lord : It is very unfortunate that I could not give you a son But it is time that you marry again and fill up this gap. I shall welcome it."

But the king could not agree Said he

"But, my dear, who will take care of the breach of peace that invariably follows such a situation as you suggest ? I do not intend to take a second wife Better have faith in luck. A throne never remains without a king"

But the queen had no peace She invoked the family deity and went on fast for three days, at the end of which the deity appeared and said,

"Lady ! I am sorry, in no case can you have a son. Such is the order of Providence and it cannot be trans-

guessed But there is one way out If the king marries with Princess Chandravali, the daughter of King Amarsana of Amarpur, he will have a son from her This gap will thus be filled."

The queen expressed her gratitude to the goddess for the advice, after which the goddess disappeared

In the morning, the queen apprised the king, and the king agreed, though with great reluctance and after much argument. The queen directed the minister to arrange the marriage without delay, and the minister lost no time to meet the princess herself at Amarpur At first meeting the minister was able to persuade her to agree to the proposal but she had one pre-condition, namely, that her husband must be a follower of the Jina path, and in this, she said, she had the support of her parents But King Chandrasekhara was not a Jaina

The minister now used his wit and said,

"Princess ! My master is tolerant of every religion The Jina path is a very good way of liberation and the king has a very high regard for it So, in a sense, you may take him to be a Jaina "

"But, sir, that's not enough You must bring my condition to the notice of your king , and if his reactions are favourable, then I am prepared to accept him as my husband "

The minister returned to his city and submitted the whole matter for the consideration of the royal couple. But the king's instant reaction was—'For the sake of this marriage, I can'nt become the follower of a Jina.' The queen and the minister argued for long with him but to no purpose

An event to take place awaits a favourable chance, and when the chance comes, the event takes no time to

materialise. A short time after this, a Jaina monk, Siddhartha by name, came to the city with a group of 500 monks and camped in the city park People came to pay their homage and obeisance At the request of the queen, the king too called on the monk, attended his sermons and was very much inspired and influenced by the monk's stature and erudition There followed a long discussion, after which the king embraced the Jaina faith on his own inspiration. It took no time for the king to become a follower of Jina, practising restraints and penances scruplously and carefully

News has wings As the news of the king's conversion reached Amarpur, the princess was very happy Through her maid, she told her father of her desire to marry King Chandrasekhara Her father too was very happy and he sent his minister at once to Virpur to settle the marriage. On an auspicious day, Chandrasekhara and Chandravali were united as man and wife, and in course of time, to the joy and relief of everybody, the new queen gave birth to a son The prince was named Sajjankumar

Sajjankumar grew up to become a fine and accomplished lad Within a short time, he acquired knowledge of all arts It was then decided to marry the prince with eight princesses, to be selected by the king himself in consultation with the two queens The selection was over and eight kings with their daughters arrived at Virpur There was a great joy everywhere But three days before the marriage, there befell a calamity which turned all joy into gloom. During the night, the prince disappeared and no trace of him could be found anywhere, and in the absence of the prince, there could be no wedding It was a great problem, and to consider the situation, the king invited the eight princesses in a meeting. Said he to them, "Ladies ! You are not yet married, and I give you leave to marry someone else of your choice. The sudden disappearance of my son has been the

greatest tragedy for me, but I do not want you to share in it. I wish you a good luck and a happy life '

But the princesses did not agree. They said,

"Worthy sir ! If our luck favours us, the prince will return some day If not, we shall engage ourselves in spiritual activities But we cannot accept another man for our husband "

They suggested that in the absence of the prince, the marriage ritual should be completed on the prince's sword The king had to agree. The eight princesses now entered their new household They preferred to stay together in one apartment and devoted themselves to spiritual activities

Days passed like this, and those were very lonesome days for the eight ladies who were virtually leading the life of nuns. One day, as they sat together chatting, said one,

"It is not wise on our part to sit idle like this We should do something in the matter "

The second—"Our father-in-law has left no stone unturned in the matter, and he has failed What then can we helpless women do ?"

The third—"But we should not consider ourselves so very helpless We are also endowed with some capacity and endeavour We may even make possible what appears impossible "

The fourth, Mrigasundari, said,

"It is necessary that our performance should excel our words. Then only our capacity and endeavour become worthy of praise If you all approve I want to move out from here in search of our husband, and I am confident, I can trace him out in six months. If I fail, I shall enter into a burning flame "

The fifth, Sringarasundari, approved of her plan and expressed her desire to accompany her, but Mriga objected saying, "Let me try alone. "If I fail, you will have your chance." The co-wives wished her good-luck. Then she came to beg leave of her parents-in-law This, however, was no easy job, and the king and the queen were not willing to let her go like this But Mriga said,

"I know, sir, you are doing your best in the matter, but let me try a hand in it If I fail, my sisters will follow one after another."

The king had to agree He wished her good luck and asked her to take as much money and as many men as she needed. She took some money but no men with her, and and then dressed like a *yogini*, she set out one day on her quest. She passed through many villages and towns, crossed many rivers and forests and at last reached a city in the south named Virpur She proceeded straight to the city park and established contact with the lady garden-keeper. The *yogini* placed two gold coins in her hand and there was no niggardliness in the flow of hospitality. She was allotted a room in the lady-keeper's house where she took residence The *yogini*, as is usual with them, roamed in the city during the day and returned to her room in the evening One day, her land-lady said,

"My dear sister! Be careful. A notorious *yogi* is on a visit to this city"

The *yogini*—"Why this warning, pray? A *yogi* is dedicated to do good to the world We should rather meet him and get inspiration from him.

The lady—"What you say is normally true, but this one is an exception At a distance of several miles from this place, there is a monastery, where live many such *yogis* They are all very honest people and are serious about their business. But recently the leader of the group has taken a

very unworthy and incompetent disciple, and has imparted to him some magical powers, which have made him powerful. He is abusing them He carries away beautiful ladies from good families and ruins them He has become a terror of the town Sometime ago a yound man named Sajjankumar came to this park with his beautiful wife As the man had gone away for a while, the *yogi* suddenly appeared and carried away the lady When Sajjankumar came back and did not see his wife, he asked me about her. I could throw no light, but another man reported that he had seen the *yogi* carrying away a lady We have no doubt that she has been carried away by this rogue "

From the identity of name, Mriga had a feeling that this man must be her own husband, meanwhile married to another lady. So she asked her land-lady,

"Whither did you see the man go ?"

"Maybe he has gone to the monastery in search of that rogue to recover his wife "

Mriga was now on the way to the monastery It was located in a dense forest but she was not afraid As she entered the monastery, a *yogini* came to receive her and took her inside and offered her a comfortable seat and fruits

Mriga—"Sister ! Tell me something about you. How did you renounce the world at this early age to become a nun ?"

The *yogini's* past at once came up before her eyes. She sobbed and said,

"At a distance of 24 *yojanas* (72 miles) from here, there is a big city named Narabara, where reigns King Vir-dhabala His queen is Virmati. They had a daughter named Karmasundari who now stands in your presence. I was

married with Prince Madan of Mrigapur. As I was going with my husband, we were attacked by a band of robbers, My husband was killed in the encounter. The robbers took away the valuables but did me no harm I returned to my parental home "

Continuing her account, she said,

"The robbers spared me but not my ill luck One day I was bitten by a snake All efforts to take the venom out failed and I lay senseless Just then a *yogini* came and said to my father. 'If you agree to give this girl to me, I shall rid her of the poison ' If my father did not agree, death would be a certainty for me In going with the *yogini*, I would at least have my life saved So he agreed. The *yogini* took out a root from her bag and administered it on my wound A portion of the same root was crushed and mixed with water and this I was made to drink. This saved me, and I followed the *yogini*. Now, as you see, I am settled and happy in this life. But, sister, happiness does not remain undisturbed for long, and a few weeks ago, the *yogini* has passed away leaving me alone. There is another monastery not at a very great distance from here and that is occupied by a few *yogis*. The monastery is very old and well-known. Many great *yogis* have lived there But now all of them are dead and the headship of the monastery has passed into the hands of a rogue. Religion and spirituality are his least interest, his main pre-occupation being to carry away beautiful women He was after me once but could do nothing because of the superior power of my preceptress. But as she has passed away, I was feeling somewhat lonely. Just at this time, your arrival has been a source of solace and strength to me This, in brief, is my story. But what is it that has brought you to this line at this early age ?"

Mriga started her account,

"I am Padmashri, the daughter of a merchant named Padmadeva of Palaspur. I was married with another merchant of the same city His name was Sundara. I was

very beautiful. Once I accompanied my husband on a voyage but we were drowned due to ship-wreck. Somehow I was supported by the back of a fish, which started moving as soon as I fell on her Luckily, it moved towards the coast instead of going into greater depth, and I was thus saved from the jaws of death But now I was all alone, there being no trace of my husband after the tragedy, and to protect myself from wicked persons, I have dressed myself like this and am looking for my husband, if he is still alive. And in the course of my search, I have arrived here "

Karma—"Now I suggest, you spend much of your time with me here."

Mriga agreed Thus the two lived together aad were very happy in each other s company One day, Mriga said,

"Sister ! Let us go some day to this monastery and see what sort of *yogi* that rogue is "

Karma—"Sister ! Don't cherish such an idea What to speak of going there, even to turn one's face in that direction may not be free from danger Once you are in his clutches, none can save you."

Mriga—"But you should not be so nervous I shall protect you You take me there once "

One day, the two reached the *yogi's* monastery The *yogi* was asleep at that time. Both of them sat near him. There was a parrot who was gesturing something again and again When the *yogi* woke up, he was surprised to see two beautiful ladies seated beside him They had come without his seeking He felt an excitement and welcomed them, whereon Mriga said,

"Fie on thy welcome ! You seem to be a wretched person to whom we have come even without an invitation.

The *yogi* cast lustful glances at her

And here there is no water even to drink, what to speak of fruits and other edibles "

"Why! There's plenty of water in that yonder jar You may have as much of it as you please It is cold too "

"But, sir, it's unclean Just now, a dog drank from it "

"Then bring that cage to me "

Mriga gestured and Karma brought the cage down and placed it near the *yogi* The *yogi* opened the cage and cut the thread that tied the parrot. The parrot was taken out and was changed into a human being The *yogi* ordered him to fetch some fresh water from the tank

By her coquettish manner, Mriga had already established a hold on the *yogi*. He was now casting lustful glances at her. All on a sudden, Mriga said,

"I am very hungry Give me some fruits to eat "

The *yogi* was now in an awkward situation, as there was none in his room So the *yogi* himself went out to bring some fruits Meanwhile the man (former parrot) came back with a a jar full of water He said,

"You fly away from this place at once Otherwise, you will have ill luck similar to that which befell my wife "

Mriga expressed a surprise and said,

"Noble man! What happened to your wife? Who are you and how you fell into his hands ?"

The man—' My name is Sajjankumar My wife is the daughter of a *vidyadhara* This *yogi* has snatched her away from me and kept her in that yonder cave. As I came here in search of her and reached the cave, he changed me into a parrot and put me in the cage "

Mriga made the man sit on one side She was more or less sure that this was her own husband. In the meantime, the *yogi* had returned with fruits in his hand After all were refreshed, the *yogi* took Mriga aside and was about to embrace her when the lady said,

"Why are you in so great a hurry? I am not running away You give answer to my questions first, and then you are at liberty to use my person for the satisfaction of your passionate desires Now that I am yours, tell me first, what will happen to me after you die Man is mortal, and someday, you are bound to die"

The *yogi* replied casually,

"My Master has made me immortal. He made an image in hay which resembles me in minutest details. So long as that image is intact, I am all right, beyond the clutches of death So you entertain no fear on that score"

Mriga protested,

"But, sir, even in the past, there have been many great and brilliant men on this earth. They could have made themselves immortal in the same manner, but they couldn't do that So death is a certainty. It spares none"

The *yogi*—"These so-called brilliant men didn't have the power which I have Hence they fell prey to death But don't you bother Come along"

Mriga—"But before that, you must show me the image"

The *yogi*—"Don't be in a hurry, my dear! I will show it to you later You are simply wasting valuable time in useless talk."

But Mriga was insistent She must see it first But the *yogi* was reluctant to oblige her So she turned her back owards him and sat down adamant

The *yogi*—"Since you are so arrogant and unreasonable, go to the yonder cottage and have a look at it and come back at once."

Mrga went to the cottage and was soon inside. With a swift hand, she tore one of its fingers At once, one of the *yogi's* fingers fell on the ground She pulled out one of the eyes, and the *yogi* became blind of one eye She took out one ear and the *yogi* lost his own. Already the *yogi* had startad shouting and abusing her, but she took no notice of that She now separated the limbs one by one with a swift hand, and then placed the trunk under a huge stone. The *yogi* himself was caught in the same manner.

Karma, who had been witnessing all this from a distance, was astonished at the courage and ready-wit of her friend. Now she came near, profusely thanked her and praised her, and said "What poison would never have achieved, you have done with jaggery "

Mrga now came out of the cottage and sternly asked the man (former parrot),

"Do you want to be changed into a parrot or remain a human being ?"

The man who was badly shaken said,

"It is by your grace that I have been liberated from this animal form Now, I would like to live as a human being. Have pity on me and rescue my wife too She is in the yonder cave, also imprisoned. The *yogi* caused her enough trouble. But she is so devoted that she deviated not from the path of chastity "

Mrga, followed by Karma and the man, came to the cave The lady was taken out and consoled with the information that the *yogi* was no more. Mrga now asked the man to narrate his story in detail, which he did as follows :

"I am Sajjankumar, the only son of King Chandrasekhara of Virpur. I was going to be married to eight princesses All preparations for the marriage ceremony had been completed and only three days remained for it, when one night I was stolen by the wife of a *vidyadhara* king. The lady took me to her own chamber and desired to enjoy my company But I was not prepared to oblige her. To protect myself from any further overtures from her side, I remained mute. Meanwhile, the *vidvadhara* king had returned and was watching the bahaviour of his wife from hiding Now, when the lady failed in all her stratagems, she started shouting and abusing me with vile and ignoble words Soon she attracted a crowd and I was put under arrest. Next day, I was presented before the king who asked me many questions, but I gave only one reply to all, which was, 'Ask me not, ask your queen' The *vidyadhara* king seemed to be satisfied with my reply, and gave me his daughter, Puspamanjari, who became my first wife I lived there for some time and learnt some of the powers.

"After a month's stay there, my mind went back to my eight wives at home So I requested my new father-in-law, the *vidyadhara* king, to arrange for my return to my native city A big air-chariot was built up and on a fine day, I, with my wife, Puspamanjari, was very cordially seen off. The chariot dropped us at Virpur and flew back It was night then and I could not recognise if I had reached the correct place In the morning, I discovered that it was not my own city, but Virpur in the south, which was at a very great distance from my own place So I left my wife in the park, and went to the city. During my absence, the *yogi* stole my wife and carried her away When I returned to the park, she was not there I was very anxious and made enquiries about her from the lady-keeper of the park, but she could throw no light But her surmise was that the *yogi*, who had been seen in the park, must have carried away the lady. So I started in search of the *yogi*, and

reached a tank where I found him But as I approached near him, he threw a thread on my neck and turned me into a parrot Since then I have been living, caught up in his snares, the life of a bird. Today, by dint of your kindness, I have been liberated from that animal form and restored to my original one "

Now Puspamanjari was brought out from the cave Then they made a thorough search of the *yagi's* abode and collected all valuable things, and took the road leading to Karma's abode They spent the night there and in the morning, the three made preparations to depart But Karma felt lonely and downcast She said to Mriga,

"Dear sister ! Why do ye discard me alone in this deserted forest ? Please take me too with thee so that I can spend the rest of my life at thy feet "

Mriga welcomed the idea All of them came to the lady-keeper of the park who recognised them They had their lunch at her house The prince then retired to have rest and the ladies moved out talking with one another.

The king of that city had died recently , and as he had no progeny, the people of that city were in great difficulty about his successor to the throne According to the established convention, they let loose an elephant to garland the right man, and as luck would have it, the elephhnt placed the garland on Sajjankumar who lay beneath a tree in the park The elephant picked up Sajjankumar with its trunk and placed him on its back The selection was thus happily over and the people hailed him as their new monarch with shouts of joy

The prince was a stranger to the city as he went to sleep , but as he opened his eyes, he found himself on the back of the elephant, turned into a full monarch He was carried through the city, to the royal palace, where he was duly enthroned and declared king of the realm

As the ladies came back after a promenade, the keeper broke the good news,

'Hullo, ladies ! The man who came with you is now a king"

This was a pleasant surprise Meanwhile arrived a chariot send by the king to take the ladies They were now at the palace

Mriga had not revealed her identity so far Now it was time to do so This was a great surprise for Sajjankumar Mriga now insisted that they must return to their native city at once where other co-wives were anxiously waiting for them Besides, as she had moved out on her mission for six months, the period was nearing its end, and unless they returned at once, the second co-wife would move out on a similar mission Sajjankumar readily agreed So after having made necessary arrangement for the administration of the kingdom, the whole party moved out.

But meanwhile six months had passed before the party could return, and as per previous decision, the second co-wife, Sringarasundari, with the blessings of her parents-in-law and good-wishes of other co-wives, and dressed as a man moved out on horse back Sringarasundari became Samanta Singh Samanta Singh reached the park at Mahimapur, contacted the lady-keeper and thrust five pieces of gold into her hand At once, his board and lodging were arranged making him comfortable. The horse was tied in the stable and served with fresh grass Samanta Singh took his food and retired under the shade of a tree, where he was soon asleep

Just then Princess Sulochana had arrived in that park with her friends and attendants Her eyes suddenly fell on Samanta Singh, and she was attracted by his grace and personality Said she,

"I shall deem it a piece of good luck if my parents settle my marriage with this man."

Said a friend,

"But, I am afraid, your desire is not going to be fulfilled Your father has some other arrangement for your marriage."

"Some other arrangement for my marriage ! What do you mean ? Are you serious ?"

"It is well-known to you, dear princess, that a lion has of late started causing havoc in this region. Everyday he is taking a heavy toll of life of animals and human beings All efforts to eradicate this menace have failed so far So the king has issued forth an announcement to the effect that anyone who kills this lion wins your hand, along with half the kingdom. None has responded yet If this man does, then it will be easy for you to have your desire fulfilled."

As they were chatting, Samanta Singh woke up. The princess now advanced towards him and introduced herself. Soon the two become intimate with each other. After this, the princess and her friends returned to the palace Meanwhile, Samanta Singh got a full report about the lion from the keeper lady, who further cautioned him not to venture But Samanta Singh did not want to miss the chance With a drawn sword in his hand, he went to the forest and kept a vigil. As the lion came at night, he was caught unawares Samanta Singh finished him at one stroke At day-break, the news flashed all over the city with the speed of a lightning The king sent for the saviour of his kingdom and received him in audience He made enquiries about his family and was assured to know that Samanta Singh was a prince of the royal blood The princess was married with him.

For Samanta Sin , it was now a very trying situation. He did not want his i ntity to be revealed to the princess. So he said to her

"My dear ! Till I obtain the blessing of my family goddess, we should not share the same bed "

This appeared to be a reasonable request, and Sulochana readily agreed Samanta Singh now departed with the permission of his wife's parents By the time he reached a forest, the sun had already set So he tied his horse to a tree and himself lay beneath it At mid-night, the goddess of the forest thought of taking a test of the man who had come within her jurisdiction She changed herself into a fine lad, came to the man and started playing mischief, some mild and others strong Samanta Singh rose upto the situation and responded very suitably This pleased the goddess, who now appeared in her own form and asked the man to pray for a boon

"Oh goddess ! If you are really pleased with me, then help me to reach my husband "

The goddess said,

"You are here in search of your husband ; and to-morrow your husband enters his native city If you are keen to meet him I can take you there "

The goddess picked up Sringarasundari along with her horse and placed her in her husband's city She first met Mrigasundari and their joy knew no bound Sringarasundari next met her husband.

When the news of Sajjankumar's arrival reached the palace, King Chandrasekhara, the six wives of the prince, the royal household and many leading citizens came to receive him The whole party was taken to the palace in a procession. On an auspicious day, the eight princesses were

married to Sajjankumar. A special envoy was sent to bring Princess Sulochana, who also joined the prince's seraglio as his wife

Sajjankumar was a very able ruler. Because of his good administration, he achieved great popularity He had in his suzereinty the two Virpurs, one in the north and the other in the south and half of Mahimapur. He had a son from Mrigasundari who was named Mrigakumar and another from Sringarasundari who was named Bhimkumar. Other queens too had children, so that the royal household was full and beaming

After a brilliant regime, Sajjankumar now had his turn to renounce, and he did it under the guidance of his father now a monk, who had come to the city in the course of his wanderings He had become an omniscient The entire royal household and the leading citizens waited on their former monarch and paid homage and obeisance They listened to the holy words of the great savant and were inspired Sajjankumar decided to join the holy order Mrigakumar was made the ruler at Virpur (north) and Saktikumar was sent to Virpur (south), while the half kingdom at Mahimapur was given to Bhimkumar Then in the company of 500 men, Sajjankumar joined the holy order as Mrigasundari herself joined the holy order of nuns in the company of a thousand ladies As a monk, Sajjankumar attained great spiritual heights and acquired *avadhi* knowledge, and on death, he got a coveted position in the Sarvartha-siddha *vimana*

3. NALA-DAMAYANTI

There was a city named Kundinapur in Vidarbha where reigned King Bhima. His queen was Puspavati. One night, the queen saw in a dream an elephant (Hindi *'danti'* meaning one with tusks) terrified by a forest fire. Shortly after this, a daughter was born to her and she was named Davadanti, popularly called Damayanti Damayanti's childhood passed in great comfort and happiness. When she attained her youth, the king thought of giving her a chance to select her own husband Many big and powerful princes were invited from lands near and far off Among those who responded to the invitation was King Nisadha of Ajodhya who came with his two sons, Nala and Kuvara Damayanti's choice fell on Nala, which was widely appreciated by everybody The marriage was performed with the greatest pomp and the king bestowed on his daughter a very rich dowry consisting of elephants, horses, maids, valets, clothes, utensils, ornaments and many other things

Having attained his old age, King Nisadha renounced the royal responsibilities in favour of his eldest son Nala Nala was an able administrator and he extended the limits of his kingdom In fact, he became the lord of half of Bharata-varsa and many powerful kings become his vassals People of all ranks were happy with Nala's administration, and that was the main reason of his success as a king

Even a mighty tree may be ruined if a poisonous insect perches on it. Likewise, a single member in the family can effect the ruin of the entire family Nala had great affection for his younger brother but this was not reciprocated by the latter, who wanted to see Nala ruined and turned into a beggar. But because of Nala's success, he was not getting a chance to execute his vile design.

A man becomes perfected only on overcoming attachment, but not before that. And even a perfected man may be ruined by a single lapse. King Nala was a great master

of state-craft, but he had a passion for gambling and because of this, many of his good qualities were over-shadowed Kuvara knew it well and he decided to ruin him by challenging him at dice. One day, as both the brothers were at the game, Kuvara said

"Brother! This game without a stake does not give the real pleasure"

Nala was so much absorbed that he did not consider what this would lead him to and he went on staking his towns and villages one after another, and at last his own city He lost his all within a short time, and was reduced to complete penury

As Nala's stars went down, Kuvara's stars moved up He burst out into a wild laughter at this unexpected success of his stratagem Nala now realised where he stood and he was penitent But it was too late Kuvara at once issued an announcement of his immediate accession to the throne and of Nala's exile People were very much pained and distressed as they heard this

Nala then decided to have a confrontation with his destiny He came to Damayanti and apprised her of the situation, This was a great shock for her But as a devoted wife, she at once made up her mind to follow her husband She said,

"My dear! This kingdom no longer belongs to us We must leave this place at once All these now belong to Kuvara"

Nala—"I have decided to go to the forest, but you better go to your parental home Life in the forest will be extremely hard for you. When our time will improve, we shall meet again"

Damayanti—"You will be in the forest and I shall be in my parental home A nice idea indeed! But how do you think this to be possible? I shall follow you like a shadow wherever you go. I cannot live apart."

Nala was in a difficult situation. In taking her to the forest, he would cause her the greatest inconvenience, and yet it would be no easy job to leave her behind. In a resigned mood, he said,

"Damayanti ! Good girl, I wish you accept my proposal Otherwise, you do whatever you think best "

Damayanti—"But, pray, tell me, are you better used to live in the forest than me ? Let me share in your joys and sorrows Please make no suggestion about my staying apart "

Nala could no longer leave her behind Both of them put on very ordinary clothes and moved towards the forest People came to see off their monarch with tears in their eyes Nala's parting message to his people was ·

"Be as good to Kuvara as you have been to me Never transgress his orders or act contrary to his wishes Entertain no anxienty on my score. Wherever I may be, I shall remain as happy as I have ever been When the duration of my exile will be over, I shall come back again "

Nala and Damayanti now moved on. They had neither transport not attendants with them They moved on till evening, with their legs badly hurt by pebbles and thorns. When the sun was down, they sat down under a tree. Nala prepared a bed of green leaves Damayanti lay down on it and was soon fast asleep. Nala sat awake pondering over his ill-luck

Suppressed thoughts come up often at the slightest support, and then not only a man may get lost in them, be may even perpetrate very unusual things. As Damayanti lay asleep, Nala touched her wounded feet and was deeply aggrieved He said to himself,

"I have reasoned with her in all possible ways, but she did not agree. If she had agreed to live with her parents, she could have escaped these hard experiences. But she

will not do that So if I leave her here, she will have no other choice but to go to her parents"

No sooner did he think like that, he at once took steps to give effects to his thought He left Damayanti alone in that forest and was on his legs. But after he had gone to some distance, he felt a heaviness in his heart Thought he,

"Did I not promise at the time of marriage that we shall live together both in joy and sorrow? Did I not say—'I shall not betray thee'? And what am I doing now to her?"

His legs would carry him no further He stood for a while wholly perplexed, and then he retraced his steps. He came back where Damayanti still lay fast asleep. He looked at her. He took her in deep embrace

Three quarters of the night passed like this. Nala could not arrive at a firm decision Sometimes he thought of discarding her, and again he thought of not leaving her alone Sometimes he felt a deep attachment for her and again he became hard like a thunder But at last softness yielded, and Nala took a firm decision to leave Damayanti in the forest While departing, he scribbled his message to her on a corner of her *sari*

Nala was now passing through a deep forest, when suddenly he heard a voice,

"Nala, come, hurry up, man, I am burning Save me"

Nala looked all around but found none But after he had gone a short distance, he saw a black cobra on a tree, beneath which there was a fire ablaze in all fury It was the cobra who spoke in a human voice and which Nala had heard.

Nala felt compassion for the snake. He extended his shoulder cloth and helped it to get down. But the snake did not spare him It gave him a severe bite Nala did not die, of course, but he lost his normal complexion and became swarthy He also developed a hump on his back Said he almost spontaneously,

"Is this the reward you give me ?"

But the snake was no longer there, and in its place stood a *deva* who said,

"My son ! Have no misgiving. I am thy departed father. Your inauspicious *karma* is now up and you will pass through difficulties and dangers for a period of 12 years I have come here to render you a little assistance so that your enemies may not recognise you and cause you further trouble. So I took out your normal complexion and made you a hunchback At the expiry of 12 years, you will again be the king at Ajodhya and be reunited with your wife."

The *deva* then gave Nala two fruits, a *srifala* and a *karandaka* and said,

"My son ! If at any time you want to get back your original form, you decorate yourself with ornaments contained in the *srifala* and put on the divine cloth contained in the *karandaka* and you will become Nala again "

Nala was overwhelmed at the appearance of his departed father at this moment He bowed down before him and said,

"Father ! If you be so kind to direct me, whither shall I turn my steps now ? What will be good for me ?"

No sooner did Nala utter these words than the *deva* physically lifted Nala up and placed him outside the city of Sumsumara and said,

"This place will be wholesome for you in all respects "

The *deva* disappeared and the hunchback moved into the town. At that moment the town was in topsy-turvy. The people were aimlessly running about to save themselves. The king's elephant had gone amock and was running about causing havoc The king announced a suitable reward for anyone who would bring the elephant under control. The hunchback heard the announcement and was soon before the elephant. People sought to prevent him but he would listen to none Now, as the elephant's eyes fell on the hunchback, he hurled his trunk at him in fury. The hunchback stepped a little aside, and with a high jump placed himself on the elephant's crest Nala was a great expert in controlling elephants He uttered his magic words and patted on the animal's head, and the elephant was cured of his fury

The hunchback was taken to the presence of the king The king received him and asked him about his identity to which he replied.

' I am the cook of King Nala, with specialisation, by the grace of my precious master, to cook in the rays of the sun From the day he has been exiled from his kingdom, I have also left Ajodhya Since then, I have passed through many places, but I have not been able to settle at any one of these "

The king at once appointed him to be the head of his kitchen He gave him a respectable place in the household Occasionally, he prepared food in the rays of the sun for the king, and the king liked him very much. The intimacy between the two went on increasing

Elsewhere, Damayanti woke up at dawn, but she did not find Nala anywhere near her. She looked for him all around and searched all the nearby bushes. She came to the

The snake gave him a severe bite

bank of a tank. But Nala was nowhere. Her patience was exhausted and she fell down in a swoon When she regained her senses, she felt extremely restless, and was unable to bear the pangs of separation She was afraid too at this lonely place. At last, helpless, she came back under the same tree where she lay at night and wept bitterly. As she raised the border of her *sari* to wipe out her tears, she discovered the note tied in its corner The note read as follows

'Beside the yonder tree, there is a road that leads to your parents' home The other road to the left leads to Ajodhya. Do not be anxious on my score. At the proper time, I shall came back to you Meanwhile, please forgive me for departing without informing you "

On reading the message, Damayanti felt distressed. Thought she, 'He had often suggested that I should go to live with my parents, but on this point, I made no secret of my own feeling But now he has left me with no alternative Perhaps it would have been good for me to act according to his wishes But what was destined has come to pass '

She got up, recited the holy *namokar* and took the road to her parental home On the way, she came across a merchant who was being plundered by a robber From a distance, Damayanti thundered at him and the fellow took to his heels This saved the merchant's life and his wares. The merchant thanked her and begged to be advised if he could be of any help to her Damayanti thanked him and proceeded on her own way

As she passed through the forest, a dreary demon barred her way He was hungry for three days and was delighted to see his food so near at hand Said he,

"I shall satisfy my hunger with thy body."

Damayanti was not afraid of him. She gave a bold reply,

"I am not afraid of you nor sorry to know that you want me as your food But I am pretty alarmed on thy score It is not good to kill anyone and eat his flesh. This has a dire consequence. You are yourself a *deva* and you understand it better than me who am an ordinary human being "

These words made a great impression on the demon. He now appeared in his real form as a *deva* and begged to be forgiven Damayanti told him about her own ill-luck and asked him when she will be reunited with her husband. The *deva* said,

"Your troubles will continue for 12 years, after which everything will be all right

The *deva* disappeared and Damayanti resumed her journey She came across many wild animals but none touched her. Meanwhile the rainy season had started and it was difficult to continue the journey So she took shelter in a cave and spent much of her time in meditation and pious thoughts Her presence in the forest changed even the nature of the wild animals Even some monks of heretical orders came to her for guidance and she set them all on the right track To all of them she was the Holy Mother

When the months of the rainy season were over, she moved out of the cave and commenced her journey again At last, she reached Achalapura where reigned King Rituparna His queen, Chandiayasa, was Damayanti's own maternal aunt. Damayanti halted outside the city on the bank of a tank. Now, some maid-servants from the palace had come there, and they were delighted to see such a graceful lady on the bank of the tank They reported the

matter to the queen and she sent her men to take her to the palace At the palace, Damayanti gave the following account of herself,

"I was in the service of Queen Damayanti, the celebrated wife of King Nala When, due to the coming up of inauspicious *karma*, the royal couple was exiled, I have been dislodged from my position, and while wandering, I have arrived here"

The queen was overwhelmed to hear Damayanti's name There were tears in her eyes The remembrance of her ill-luck even gave her pain She employed the lady in her own service Ever since she left the palace, Damayanti had changed so much that even her aunt could not recognise her Damayanti stayed there She took charge of the king's alms-house where hundreds of people arrived everyday. She carefully observed all newcomers and enquired about them She had a feeling that perhaps in this manner someday she might hit on a clue about Nala's whereabouts

After Nala and Damayanti had gone into exile, the news reached King Bhima who was very much shocked He sent messengers in all directions but none could trace them out But the king did not give up the search One of his messengers reched Achalapura, where the king and the queen were no less concerned to know the whereabouts of Nala and his wife But they told the messenger that a lady had recently joined their royal household who, as per her statement, was once in the service of Queen Damayanti and this lady might be able to throw further light on Damayanti

"So if you so please, you may see her in the alms-house", they added

The messenger came to the alms-house and recognised Damayanti at once As the news reached the palace, the

king and the queen came running offering a thousand apologies for their failure to recognise her Damayanti was brought to Kundinapur, where the joy of her parents knew no bound when they saw their missing daughter.

But there was no trace of Nala yet and so King Bhima could not be fully happy Whenever a foreigner visited the city, he was put under elaborate interrogation by the king's men At last, a merchant who had come from Sumsumara reported as follows

"Your Majesty ! I can tell you nothing about King Nala, but the king of that city has a strange hunchback in his service who can cook in the rays of the sun. It is this fellow who once saved the whole city from the rage of an infuriated elephant His name is Dandika and he is reported to have formerly been in the service of King Nala He further says that he has acquired these powers from the great King Nala himself"

Damayanti heard the account and said at once,

"None save Nala is in possession of these powers Perhaps he has said so to *remain incognito* We should immediately look him up"

But Bhima was an experienced and wise man He made his own plan to put the fellow under a test, and with this end in view he sent a special envoy to the king of Sumsumara The envoy saw the king and revealed as follows the purpose of his mission,

"Your Majesty ! King Bhima of Kundinapura has decided to convene an assembly of princes for the marriage of his beloved daughter for the second time. I have been commissioned to invited Your Majesty for the occasion. The princess will select her man only tomorrow. In fact, I should have reached this place three days ago, but

unfortunately I fell ill We shall appreciate if Your Majesty can make arrangement to participate "

For the king, it was a great surprise Said he,

"A selection for the second time !"

The envoy—"But, Your Majesty, what can be done ? We have looked for King Nala everywhere, but no trace has been found of him. A grown-up lady cannot be kept like this in her father's home "

The king—"But will it not be a stigma on the lady's purity ?"

The envoy—"Your Majesty will agree that the other alternative of leaving her like this is no less risky All things considered, a fresh selection seems to be the wiser course So please come and participate "

At the first selection, King Dadhiparna was a suitor of the lady's hand, but he came back disappointed So he had a feeling that this time luck might favour him But time was the most crucial factor To cover a distance in one day which normally took four days—the king was in deep anxiety

When the hunchback came to know of this, he was wholly upset The news was too good to be true It rolled on in his mind, and he was agitated and restless But suddenly an idea struck him He felt that surely there was some plan behind the whole move

"I must find out the secret," thought he

When the hunchback met the king, the latter was in deep anxiety He enquired the reason for that and the king narrated the whole situation, adding in the end,

"This is a golden opportunity to win the hand of this worthy lady but it seems that time will be the major hurdle."

The hunchback smiled and said, "Your Majesty! I can take you to Kundinapur even before time. I have the power to quicken the pace of the horses."

The king was now out of a difficult situation He dressed himself suitably for the occasion, with all the decorations displayed on his person. Duly attended by his men, the king now took his seat on the chariot. The chariot pierced through the air at a great speed At the gust of the wind, the king's costly wrapper was swept away When the king asked his charioteer to stop the chariot and pick it up, the hunchback smiled and said,

"Your Majesty! By this time, it must be at a distance of a hundred *yojanas* (300 miles)"

So the king gave up all hope of recovering it.

The king and the hunchback were now talking about the wonderful power that gave so much speed to the horses The king was jealous of his charioteer, but he said,

"If you are an expert in speed, I am an expert in numbers I can count in a moment all the fruits and leaves even on the biggest of trees. If we had time, I could have demonstrated it"

"We have plenty of time, sire, and if you so please, you may demonstrate this power to me"

So the chariot was stopped. There was a big *bahera* tree there It was felled down at once and the king declared that it had 18000 leaves. A count was at once started and the king's figure came out to be correct

The hunchback who had a great capacity for acquisition expressed a desire to acquire this power, but the king suggested at once an exchange with the huncback's won power, and to this both agreed. So, in the course of the flight, they acquired each other's power. Now, the chariot landed at Kundinapura even two hours before the scheduled me

Now, as the king looked at the town, life appeared to be quite normal, and there was no sign of any special occasion When the news of the king's arrival reached Bhima, he received his honoured guest, with no less honour for the charioteer, the hunchback, and both were lodged n an elegant apartment not far from Damayanti's own King Bhima enquired abount the business that had brought the king to his kingdom King Dadhiparna at once realised hat he ha se hi foot in a trap So he became caref l in hs tal

Meanwhile, Damayanti had occasion to observe the hunchback, and she had little doubt about his being King Nala She told this to her father The hunchback entertained the host family with food cooked in the rays of the sun Damayanti was now pretty sure that this could be none other than Nala, for Nala alone possessed the two powers,—power to cook in the rays of the sun, and power to drive the chariot through the air So she requested her father to send the hunchback to her room on some pretext

This was not difficult The hunchback now stood face o face with Damayanti, and there were tears in their eyes and emotion in their hearts For some time, none could speak a word Then Damayanti broke the silence,

"My dear ! What was my fault that you gave me up alone in that lonely and dreadful forest ? Even an ordinary human being will not do that, and you count among the great souls. Even now you have not revealed your identity s oe or yo ?"

Nala was completely overwhelmed at Damayanti's words, but had hardly an expression to convey his feeling He at once put on the cloth and the ornament given to him by his father and regained his normal form. This was a pleasant surprise for Damayanti. She at once embraced her husband In deep embrace, both shed tears of joy. The news reached the palace and everybody was happy at the reunion

When King Dadhiparna heard this, he realised that the whole drama was enacted to regain Nala He was pretty ashamed and afraid He rushed at once to King Nala and begged to be forgiven, tendering a thousand apologies At the same time he expressed deep regret for having desired to get Damayanti.

The period of 12 years was now drawing to its close, and at the suggestion of King Bhima and King Dadhiparna, and with their help, Nala laid seige to his former kingdom. He was victorious and was once again on the throne of Ajodhya

Once an omniscient monk came to Ajodhya, and King Nala enquired for what fault on his part, he had to pass through these dreadful experiences for 12 years Revealing his past, the omniscient monk said,

"In your previous birth too, both of you were king and queen, named Mammana and Viramati respectively Once both of you were out on a promenade and were enraged to see a tonsured monk. Taking it to be a bad omen, you threw the monk into the prison. When after 12 hours, your anger had cooled down, you set him free and begged of him to be forgiven. Normally, both of you were pious souls practising austerities and penances necessary for a meritorious life and thus you earned a great merit. By virtue of that, you are king and queen again. But that

single lapse on your part which made the tonsured monk the victim of your wrath for 12 hours has given you trouble for 12 years."

With their past revealed, King Nala and Damayanti realised the transitoriness of mundane happiness and thought of renouncing the world. They gave the mantle of the highest office to their son Puskara and entered into the holy order, acquiring great merit through spiritual practices and reaching heaven after death

4. MRIGANKALEKHA

Abantisena was the king at Ujjain. In the same city, there lived a merchant named Dhanasar. The name of the merchant's wife was Rambha and that of his daughter Mrigankalekha The girl was pious from her childhood, and had acquired at quite an early age 64 arts So she was loved by all in the household. Dhanasar erected a Jina temple in his garden where he used to go with his wife and daughter for worship One day, Mrigankalekha worshipped the image with various offerings, and then to worship in a subjective form, she stood in meditation in the presence of the image in the *kayotsarga* posture Just then, Sagarchandra, the son of a merchant named Sagardatta came to that temple in the company of his friends. He worshipped the image of the Jina, and then mistaking Mrigankalekha in her *kayotasarga* posture for a statuette, he touched her feet. At this, his friend gave him a gentle push and burst out laughing The young man was puzzled, when the friend told him that the statuette whose feet he had touched was no stone image but a living person, named Mrigankalekha

Now the young man was keen to get her as his wife, but he did not know how In severe anguish, he became greatly reduced, which become a cause of worry to his parents When the parents came to know the reason thereof from the said friend, they were not at all angry with their son, but they assured him that they would do their best in this matter. Now, in the same garden, Sagardatta erected a temple and dedicated it to Arhat Risabha A very elaborate ceremony was arranged for dedication which lasted for 10 days. On the 10th day, a banquet was held in which all the important people of the town were invited. Dhanasar too was present. After the banquet, as the people relaxed in the hall, somebody suggested that the day was auspicious

enough for the marriage to be celebrated between Sagarchandra, Sagardatta's son, and Mrigankalekha, Dhanasara's daughter, and all people present liked the idea So did the father of the bride and that of the bridegroom

Arrangements were made at-once for the celebration of the marriage ceremony Meanwhile, Sagarchandra expressed a desire to his friend to see the lady once before marriage This was a meaningless wish, since the lady had aleady been bethrothed to him, and no useful purpose would be served now by seeing her before marriage But Sagarchandra was adamant and so his friend very reluctantly agreed Both were to see the lady in her apartment incognito No sooner did they think of it than they gave effect to it Both the friends were now in the lady's apartment invisible to anyone The lady was enjoying a friendly conversation with her mates

Chitralekha—'My friend is lucky to get such a man as Sagarchandra "

Patralekha—"Whatever may be your view, to my mind, Anangadeva, son of Dhana Sresthi, would have been a better husband for our friend In beauty, he excels even the God of Love "

Chitralekha—"You know, once an astrologer was consulted about Mrigankalekha's groom He revealed that in beauty and wealth, Anangadeva would be the best groom for her, but he had only a short life of 20 years So, you see, he could not have been selected Otherwise, our dear friend would have been his "

Patralekha—'But don't you agree that a small quantity of nectar is better than a great quantity of poison ?"

As the conversation went on, Mrigankalekha had no active participation in it, nor did she comment on the

discussion. But her silence was misconstrued by Sagarchandra He pulled out his sword to strike at-once at the unfaithful lady. With great difficulty, his friend dragged him home. At the appointed hour, the marriage passed off without any untoward event. Sagardatta allotted a big mansion for the use of the couple. But alas ! Sagarchandra did not come to live there with his wife. He would not even look at the mansion. Mrigankalekha could find no reason for this behaviour on the part of her husband which caused her a great misery. However, since separation was forced on her, she devoted herself to a spiritual life.

Once King Avantisena prepared plans for the invasion of Latadesa He sent for Sagardatta and asked him to send his son to accompany the army on the march and arrange the supply of provision for the soldiers Sagardatta agreed. Sagarchandra now started with the blessing of his parents As he was about to pass from beneath the mansion where Mrigankalekha lived, she came at the window to wish him good luck and bid him farewell To this Sagarchandra responded with a cruel gesture But Mrigankalekha was helpless, gnd all she could do was to console herself by saying that it was all the fruit of her inauspicious *karma*.

The army continued its march and by evening reached the bank of a river. It encamped on the bank of the river It was night and Sagarchandra was lying in his tent Suddenly he heard the cry of a lady in distress. Feeling that he might be of some use to her, he moved out in that direction with a sword in hand and after going a long distance, he saw the lady He said to her in a very affectionate voice.

"Sister ! What may by the cause of thy distress ? May I help thee in any way !"

The lady—"Friend ! I thank you for your kind words But there is none on this earth who may allay my distress. So please do not put yourself in trouble on my score."

Sagarchandra—"But, dear lady, let me share your distress with you Then we can think of a way out if possible "

The lady cast a deep sigh and said,

"This is purely a domestic affair My husband is a *Kinnara* named Hariprabha and my own name is Haravali. We were on a pleasure flight My husband suggested that we halt here right in this grove but I desired that we go to an excellent park on Mount Meru This enraged him very much and he sat apart from me All my entreaties to pacify him were in vain If you can bring about a settlement between us, I shall remain ever grateful to you "

The lady then pointed to her husband who was seated not far from there

Sagarehandra now moved to Hariprabha and tried to pacify him with the following words,

"My dear sir ! Wife is the better half of man. One should never be rude to her. You should adjust with her, as she should adjust with you. Such is the normal relation between a man and his wife. You should not be too much assertive or too much demanding This ruins domestic peace "

Hariprabha burst out in laughter when he heard these words. He said,

"Sagarchandra ! Your words are wise indeed, but you should practice what you preach. Look at your own behaviour towards your own wife whom you married 12 years ago Have you ever been good to her ? Have you ever lived with her ? What must be life to her without you ? You are like a cat that goes on pilgrimage after killing many rats. You should be ashamed of yourself. And you have come to show me the way of reason."

These words of the *Kinnara* pierced through Sagarchandra's heart. 'Mrignnkalekha is honest, says this *Kinnara*', this thought rolled again and again and created a tumult in his mind. Meanwhile, the *Kinnara* got up, picked up his wife and resumed his flight The lady did not even get a chance to thank her benefactor As a mark of gratitude, however, she sent for him two gifts, one the root of a plant and the other a herb The application of the paste from the former at the feet gave one the power to fly in the air, while the application of the latter on the forehead made it possible for one to change his form. Sagarchandra gladly accepted them

In the disturbed state of Sagarchandra's mind, there arose waves of thought These condemned him and pricked him for his behaviour towards his wife How cruel he has been to her without caring to know how honest she was ! He was now restless to go back to her at once and make amends for his misdeeds. He returned to his camp and held consultation with his friend Dhanamitra. Dhanamitra at once approved of the idea, adding that delay might bring in further complications

Both the friends used the root and were soon in the sky, and within a short time, they were at the door of the lady's apartment Dhanamitra went first to break the good news, but Mrigankalekha did not recognise him She mistook him to be a wicked fellow and chased at him Dhanamitra said,

"My sister ! You recognise me not But I have a good news for you My friend Sagarchandra is penitent now and has come For bringing him, you should give me sweets rather than harsh words "

Sagarchandra now joined. Mrigankalekha had no more doubt in the truth of Dhanamitra's words. Sagarchandra

begged again and again to be forgiven, but Mrigankalekha interrupted,

"I must have acquired some evil *karma* in the past. They had come up and I suffered. How could you have prevented them ?"

Sagarchandra spent the night with his wife, and before it was dawn, he started back to reach the camp in time. None else could know about his coming. As this might in future create difficulty for his wife, so he left with her his own ring, and took with himself her necklace

When a non-ending series of evil *karma* are pursuing, one has hardly any respite. Mrigankalekha's condition was no better She was carrying a child When this came to be known, this became a scandal Neither her parents-in-law, nor her own parents would believe in what she said, and not even Sagarchandra's own ring could be of any help to save the lady's honour She was given up by her near and dear ones

In such a desperate situation, Mrigankalekha fled from her home without telling anyone Now she started on an uncertain course The hot mid-days she spent beneath some tree, and so also the nights In the morning, she would be on her legs But she knew not which road would lead where and soon she was feeling helpless In utter desperation, she gave out a cry, which attracted a merchant named Chitragupta, who was passing by that way. He came to her and consoled her and promised her all possible help Mrigankalekha requested him to give her an escort to the camp of the marching army of the king of Avantidesa.

Mrigankalekha now proceeded in the company of the merchant, who had great admiration and regard for her. The merchant was very much impressed by the lady's grace and purity. But such was her ill-luck that one day she was

carried away by a man of the *bhila* tribe and the merchant, inspite of his best effort, could find no trace of her.

Somehow, Mrigankalekha escaped from the clutches of that *bhila* and hid yerself in a forest. She was terror-stricken, but there was no way out At night, she had a premature labour pain and she gave birth to a male child. At day-break, to clean herself, she came to the bank of a tank, placed the child and Sagarachandra's ring wrapped in a piece of cloth on the bank and herself entered into the water At a moment of absent-mindedness on her part, a dog picked up the bundle and fled. Luckily, the child and the ring were recovered in time by a merchant named Baisravana who took the child home Just then his own wife gave birth to a dead child It was a great consolation for the poor lady to get another child to take the place of her dead one The boy was named Surendradatta His arrival gave a great turn to the family's good fortune

When Mrigankalekha came out of the tank, the child was not there nor the ring All her searches for them were in vain This was a fresh tragedy and her heart broke into pieces A milkmaid Lalita saw her and she brought her to her own home For the time being, Mrigankalekha was settled in the milkmen's colony Now, the leader of the colony, one Gokula, was a debauch When he saw Mrigankalekha in the colony, he cherished some evil designs on her, but because of Lalita, he could not be successful One night, however, he stole her But the lady was too powerful to be touched by him The same night, Gokula died

After this event, Mrigankalekha was held in the highest esteem in the colony. But ill-luck would not give her respite even there One day, she drifted away again and found herself in the clutches of a village headman, Sundara by name. This man was committed to perform a big sacrifice with an offer of 20 heads to propitiate the goddess who had

bestowed on him a son. He already held 19 men for the purpose when Mrigankalekha fell into his hands, and unconcerned about her sex, Sundara wanted to use her for his own purpose All the 20 persons were now brought to the spot selected for the sacrifice and they were given leave to express their last desire on earth

All the 19 started trembling when they came to know the purpose for which they had been brought, only Mrigankalekha remained firm and fearless and said,

"Noble man! My last desire is that you make me the first prey of your purpose I cannot bear the ghastly sight of the murder of so many innocent persons in my presence. So let me get out of this world first. If however, you care for my opinion, I must say, it is really cruel to make such an offer for the propitiation of the goddess You are the village headman and as such the protector of the village. You should at least desist from such a cruel deed"

A man is often a blind slave to social conventions, but if he is hit on the right spot at the right moment he may even be saved and be made to take a turn Mrigankalekha's words served that purpose Sundara was promise-bound to fulfil the last desire of these unfortunate people, and Mrigankalekha had expressed such a desire Now, if he sacrified a woman first, then as per convention, the sacrifice of men was a taboo. So he did not know what to do The only way out was to sacrifice none This saved the lives of all

Mrigankalekha somehow escaped from there and was once again in the forest She came across a lion but the lion did not touch her She came across a ghost but the ghost could do no harm to her She spent the night beneath a tree In the morning, she started again and reached the outskirts of Siddharthapur.

There she attracted the notice of a harlot named Kamasena. She brought with her some wicked persons, came to the place where Mrigankalekha was and forcibly carried her away to her own residence. Kamasena wanted to use her for her own purpose and tried to hold up the best inducements before the lady. But it was no easy job to entrap Mrigankalekha Th same night, Kamasena died Kamasena's maid desired Mrigankalekha to take the place of her deceased mistress, but the request was made to a very wrong person

But fresh trouble was in store for Mrigankalekha. The maid carried the story of the arrival of a very fine lady to the ears of the king. The king at once sent his most able men and they forcibly carried the lady in a palanquin with a view to take her to the king's harem Mid-way she jumped down from the palanquin and began to dance and tear her clothes like a mad person She abused people, hurled stones at them and often burst out in peels of laughter. She was brought back to the harlot's home and experts were called in to cure her. But she hurled stones even at them and did not allow anyone to come near her The king then sent Kanakbahu, his own trusted body-guardn, who was also an expert in the use of charms, to find out her real trouble Kanakbahu propitiated the goddess Jwala, the attendant goddess of Arhat Chandraprabha, who make the following revelation about the lady

"She is neither mad nor ill. She is the most devoted wife of Sagarchandra, the minister of King Avantisena and is a great devotee of the Jaina path. It is her inauspicious *karma* that has brought her here. It is to protect herself that she behaves like a mad person. You adore and worship this pious lady like your family deity That will bring you good Otherwise you will invite your own ruin "

Kanakbahu gave a complete report about her to the king. The king now honoured the lady and made

arrangement for her stay with Kanakbahu. When at times she remembered her past life, her susband, her son, the stigma that separated her from her near and dear ones, the dangers through which she had passed, she felt very sad For the rest, she now completely planted herself into spiritual life

Elsewhere, her son Surendradatta had earned success in business and was now the master of a fabulous foutune Now that the son had grown up and was well established, Baisravana thought it fit to tell him all about his past, more particularly because his wife was not favourably disposed towards him and desired to get him out of the way of her own sons who were born afterwards

He gave him his father's ring and explained the circumstances in which he was rescued from the mouth of a dog and brought to his home Then he advised him to leave the place at once for the sake of safety to himself

Surendradatta moved out from there and settled at Tamralipti An able men, he earned enough money even here and then thought of finding out his parents But he knew not where and how he would find them So he propitiated the goddess Chakreswari, the attendant deity of Arhat Risabha who directed him to the park outside Siddharthapur a month hence The deity told him that there would be no particular difficulty for him to recognise his parents Surendradatta then took the road to Siddharthapur

Meanwhile, the war waged by Avantisena ended in a victory for himself It had lasted for 16 years Sagarchandra returned home and met his parents Next, he visited his wife's apartment which had a deserted look There was no trace of his dear wife anywhere When his parents tried to explain the circumstances under which they had turned her out, eh could not approve of it, more particularly so when

he had left his own ring with her. So it was his first duty to find her out. So, duly equipped, he started. He passed through many places, met many people, but none could give him any clue about his wife's whereabouts One day he met a demon who announced that he had swallowed his wife and now he wanted to swallow him too. Sagarchandra invoked the Five Great and the demon took to his heels

He was now feeling sad and did not entertain much hope about regaining her Once he thought of ending his own life even Half-mad, he was aimlessly wandering now But he could no longer bear this sort of life So one day, he built up a pyre and decided to jump into it and end his life As he was about to do so, one Sujasa the progeny of a perfected soul, appeared on the spot and dissuaded him from that terrible act He directed him to Siddharthapur, predicted for him a long and happy life, and requested him to recover Chitralekha who had been stolen by some *bhilas* whom, he said, he would encounter on the way

Sujasa now proceeded towards the Nandisvara island and Sagarchandra towards Siddharthapur He now saw a ray of hope in life On the way, he saw Chitralekha being carried away by the *bhilas* He rescued her He had now a feeling that what Sujasa had predicted might come true

Meanwhile, Surendradatta who had already reached the park at Siddharthapur performed an eight-day fast, on completion of which he arranged a mass feeding. All people of the city were invited and Mrigankalekha too was in the crowd. As she came near the host, milk flowed out from her breast indicating that the host was her own son. Meanwhile, Sujasa had returned He introduced Surendradatta to his mother asking him to touch her feet Thus Mrigankalekha received her lost child after a gap of many years.

Now Sujasa told them that Sagarchandra too was on his way to this place and suggested that they should move forward to welcome him. This they did and they were followed by many other invitees Meanwhile, Sujasa went ahead of them to inform Sagarchandra that his wife and son were coming to receive him This was a very happy occasion Surendradatta fell at his father's feet It was a happy meeting too between Mrigankalekha and Sagarchandra Mrigankalekha was happy to see her old friend Chitralekha The whole party sat down beneath a betelnut tree in a happy conversation

Then after spending a few days in that city as the guest of the king, Sagarchandra and the party returned to their own city Ujjain King Avantisena and Sagardatta were happy to see them back There was rejoicing in the whole city. Old Sagardatta and his wife Padma expressed regret for what they had done to Mrigankalekha and begged to be forgiven

Once Jugandhara Kevali came to Ujjain and halted at the city park All went to pay their homage and obeisance when Mrigankalekha made the following submission to the great monk,

"*Bhante* ! Why did I suffer so mueh in my life ?"

Throwing light on this, Jugandhar Kevali said,

"In the city of Singhapur, there lived a brahmin named Kandarpa who was an intimate friend of Prince Anantadeva. In the same city, there lived a *tapasa* monk who was held in very high esteem by all The prince was however, envious of the monk One day, the prince suggested to his friend Kandarpa that some serious charge be levelled against the monk so that he might lose his reputation Kandarpa assured his friend that he would do so

"In the same city, there lived a rich man named Padmadeva who had a daughter Kamala by name. She was

"Sister ! What may be the cause of thy distress ?"

in love with a young man named Lalitanga, son of a merchant This earned her an ill reputation as a bad girl One day, Kamala disappeared from her home without telling anyone Now on the same day, even the monk had gone out of the city. This was a nice chance for the brahmin to circulate the story that the girl had eloped with the monk People were almost convinced about the truth of the report, as both the girl and the monk were not to be found in the city "

"After a few days, the monk came back, but Kamala was not there Kandarpa was now afraid that people would come to know that his report was false and fabricated Before any such impression could be made, the brahmin excited the people against the monk The infuriated mob beat and insulted the monk but he bore everything without protest

"Truth has tongue, and evil deeds bring forth evil consequences In about a week's time, the brahmin had a virulent abscess on his tongue, of which he died. He was born as a dog, but the dog too did not live long and died of a similar abscess, to be born as a prostitute By chance, this fallen woman came in touch with a follower of the Jaina faith who saved her and gave her shelter within the fold of his religion The woman gave up her profession. One day, she went to a tank where she saw a pair of swans at play She sprayed vermilion on the male swan so that it looked all red and his female partner would not come near him out of fear. All the time, she continued a frantic search for the male partner and was very much grieved at its sudden disappearance. The lady then washed the vermilion from the body of the male swan and the two were united again after 21 hours of separation "

Concluding the account, he said,

"That woman is now born in yourself as Mrigankalekha. For having separated the female swan from its mate for 21 hours, the penalty became 21 years of separation from your husband. So knowing the sorrowful outcome of *karma*, every human being should do his best to exhaust them by following the life of a monk or that of a devoted follower."

At this revelation, Mrigankalekha was terror-stricken about the prospects She along with her husband became devoted followers of the Jaina faith. They led a worthy life and were liberated at death.

4. ANJANA

The great lady Anjana was born of the first queen Hridayasundari, wife of King Mahendrasena. She was the only sister of a hundred brothers. So her parents and brothers, all loved her very much By her habits, too, she was sweet and charming. And so she was loved by all in the royal household She impressed anyone at first sight.

To find a suitable groom for such a worthy girl, King Mahendrasena sent many envoys to lands for and near but without any success Many royal families were contacted but it was no easy job to find a suitable groom for her. One day, as the king was discussing it with the minister, the latter said,

"Your Majesty ! To the best of my knowledge, there are two princes who would make excellent grooms for our princess, one Prince Vidyutprabha, son of King Hiranyabha, and the other Pavananjaya, son of King Prahlada Between the two, Vidyutprabha is superior, but the astrologers' reading is that he would pass away to be liberated at the age of eighteen. Pavananjaya presents no such problem and is believed to have a long life. So the princess may be married with him."

After some time, King Mahendra and King Prahlada met by chance at the Nandisvara island, and interestingly enough, the proposal came from King Prahlada King Mahendra readily accepted it It was decided to complete the marriage ceremony on the third day from then on the bank of the Lake Manasa.

When an evil thing is to come up in life, even a normal desire may turn into a curse. There were only three days left for the marriage when Pavananjaya said to his friend Prahasit,

"Friend ! I have heard people extol the skill and beauty of Anjana. Although marriage is now a decided thing, I feel like seeing her once before marriage. This must be done."

Prahasit—"If that be your desire, then go ahead. I am well acquainted with all the roads in Mahendrapur. I can easily guide you upto her apartment."

The two friends set out at once. They entered into the lady's apartment unnoticed and incognito, and listened to what was going on between the lady and her attendant-friends.

Vasantatilaka—"Friend Anjana ! You are lucky that you will have Pavananjaya as your life's companion."

Misrakesi—"But, my dear friend, Pavananjaya is not as charming, vigorous and refined as Vidyutprabha. But unfortunately Vidyutprabha has a short span of life on this earth."

Anjana was no active participant in the discussion. She silently listened, and she did not protest when Vidyutkumar was praised. This enraged Pavananjaya. He said to his friend Prahasit,

"Did you hear ? What shall I do with such a wayward and unfaithful woman ?"

So saying, he took out his sword to teach her a lesson. But he was prevented by his friend, who said,

"Don't be silly and impatient. Impatience spoils everything. A ksatriya touches not a woman even though he is abused by her. Anjana did't speak ill of you. Let us go out from here."

The two slipped out unnoticed and returned to the palace. Pavananjaya said,

"I am determined not to marry with this woman. So I must quit at once without telling anybody. Let us go out from Ratnapuri. I can think of no other way of saving myself."

Prahasit tried to argue with him and show him the way of reason, but Pavananjaya was adamant. Prahasit made a last effort.

"It is the height of impertnence for a devoted son to disappear like this. It will cause your parents the greatest pain. And not to marry when everything is finalised is indecent too on your part."

Pavananjaya yielded and the ceremony passed off without any trouble. Anjana was the happiest during the ceremony, but Pavananjaya had no joy. He played his role with the greatest reluctance. King Mahendra bestowed a great dowry on his dear daughter King Prahlada's joy knew no bounds to acquire such a qualified lady for his royal household. He heartily blessed the couple.

It was the first night after the marriage, and Anjana was awake for Pavananjaya's arrival. A quarter of the night passed, but Pavananjaya did not come, and not even his steps were audible. Anjana's expectation now gave way to anxiety. She had in her mind a nice picture of her future life, but that had started fading out. She had never dreamt that even such a calamity might fall on her The night thus passed and the sun was up. There was joy everywhere except in Anjana's apartment Her only companion was Vasantatilaka to whom she narrated the sorrow of her heart. Thus days passed

Anjana tried to improve her relations with Pavananjaya. When food parcel or gift parcel arrived from her parents, she sent them to Pavananjava, but he threw them out in a very discourteous manner. She tried her best to scan her own conduct, and in it she found nothing that could be offensive in any way.

By nature, Anjana was serious and grave. She told her friend at last,

"At this moment, it seems, bad time is upon me, and anything I may do now will go against me. So I must wait for this phase to pass out."

In this manner, long twelve years passed and there was no understanding between the two, nor did the two ever meet.

Once a special emissary from King Ravana of Lanka

came to Ratnapuri with the following urgent message for King Prahlada, 'King Varuna has refused to accept the overlordship of King Ravana, because of which the latter has declared a war against him. King Varuna's son is very powerful. He has already taken some of Ravana's best generals and war-lords into captivity. So Ravana desires all his friendly kings to come to his assistanee at once.'

The emissary was cordially received The king assured him all possible help to such a great friend and agreed to despatch a strong contingent of army at once. King Prahlada himself prepared to go at the head of the army, but Pavananjaya prevailed upon him with a request to let him go at the head of the army and thus get a chance to prove his worth. The king gladly agreed.

The news soon spread through the town and the decision was hailed. Anjana too heard about it and she was happy. Now on an appropriate day, Pavananjaya started with the blessing of his parents and with the good-wishes of all his friends. But even at such a moment, he did not call on Anjana.

People had thronged in thousands at the city gate to see the prince off In one corner, Anjana too stood wishing him victory Suddenly the eyes of the prince fell on her and he was charmed with her beauty. But he did not know whether it was a carefully carved image or a real thing in flesh and blood. So he turned to his friend and said,

"Who may be that great artist that has created such a charming thing ?"

Said Prahasit,

"This is no image, but a human being in flesh and blood. She is your own wife, Princess Anjana. You have neglected her all these years, but in response to the call of her duty, she has come and stands aside to wish you well from a distance."

Pavananjaya at once lost control on himself. With bloodshot eyes, he said,

.. . The female bird was in the greatest distress and agony.

"What ! She is still after me ? Even at this exceptional moment in my life, she has taken courage to appear like an evil star :"

Pavananjaya made his way through the crowd and stood right in front of Anjana. He rebuked her and kicked her publicly. She fell down in a swoon.

Vasantatilaka who saw this from a little way off at once rushed in. Anjana was carried to her apartment. When she was restored to her senses, she said.

"May my husband win the laurels of victory !"

Pavananjaya was now far away from his city, marching at the head of the army. In the evening, they were on the bank of the Lake Manasa where tents were pitched for the night. The moon came up. In the moon light, Pavananjaya loved to see a pair of skylarks enjoying each other's company. He could not turn away his eyes. After some time, the male partner flew away, and the female bird was in the greatest distress and agony This made a deep impression on Pavananjaya who had a great compassion for the female bird. He turned to his friend and said,

"These birds live together throughout the day and then separate in the night And still the female partner feels so much distress and agony !"

Prahasit—"Well, the depth of distress like this can be known only by one who has experienced it. A night is too long. Even an hour's separation may become unbearable."

This opened Pavananjaya's eyes and he thought of Anjana and all that he has done to her. He said,

"How heavy must time be hanging on her ! How deep must be her distress ! She has been living like this, neglected, unhappy, discarded, forlorn, for long 12 years. And all this is my own doing !"

Prahasit—"You are right. Princess Anjana is really unfortunate. I am unable to measure the depth of her wound. She is gentle, noble and calm. She bears everything with patience and without uttering a single word. You

have given her up, but, you do not know, she is devoted to you. You abused her, kicked her, insulted her in public, but the worthy lady bears no malice against you. A rare piece of magnanimity, really worthy of adoration !"

Pavananjaya—"But then why didn't she protest when Vidyutprabha was extolled in most superlative terms ?"

Prahasit—"That was a mere episode not to be taken very seriously. That really meant nothing, nor does it establish that she was either unfaithful or inconsistent. And then, tell me, why did she come to see you off from a distance She wishes you victory and glory with all her heart."

Pavananjaya—"And I added to her distress by kicking at her. She was perhaps living on a streak of hope, but that day, it must have become a total darkness for her"

Prahasit—"This is very likely. She was already in the deepest of distress and agony, which must have increased a thousandfold by your impolite behaviour. It was really unbecoming of you"

Pavananjaya—"But now till I come back, it is quite likely that she may not be alive."

Prahasit —"On this point, nothing can be emphatically said. When misery takes possession of the mind, it must find an outlet in some direction."

Pavananjaya was restless.

"Then think of a way out I don't want to leave her in distress for many years now When she is in distress, how can I be successful in my mission ? It has been a great folly on my part. I must go back at once and repair her wounds. It is midnight and all the men are fast asleep I want to go at once and return before dawn. Please do the needful"

When the two friends returned to the capital, the city was dead in slumber. Anjana alone kept a vigil blaming her ill-luck. As Pavananjaya stood at a little distance, Prahasit carried the good news about the arrival of his friend. Hearing a very familiar voice, Vasantatilaka opened the door and received him.

—"Where is Princess Anjana ?"

—"Sir, excuse my ignorance. But I don't understand how you are here at this hour. If I am correct, you went out with the prince."

—"Correct. But meanwhile the prince has changed his mind towards his wife and he has returned. Please carry this good news to your great lady."

As Anjana heard some people talking at the apartment door, she raised an alarm from her own room. She had no doubt that this must be some miscreant. Prahasit announced in a loud voice that they were friends and not foes.

As Prahasit announced the arrival of his friend, this was a pleasant surprise for the lady who was least expecting such a thing. She forgot in a moment all the misery she had suffered for long 12 years and came forward to receive her husband.

It was a happy union But time has wings, and the moments of happiness are perhaps the shortest. The last two quarters of the night passed away like a minute. It was near dawn, time for Pavananjaya to depart. But before he left, he gave a ring with his name carved on it to Anjana as a proof of his having spent a night in her apartment.

News soon reached the palace that Anjana was carrying a child. There started a gossip all over the city. One day, Queen Ketumati, Anjana's mother-in-law, came to her apartment to verify the facts herself. Anjana received her with due respect, but Ketumati burst our in great anger,

"Ye harlot ! What's this ? You have stained the family's great reputation. What have you done when your husband is out of this city ? I must report it to the king at once and get you removed from the palace right now."

Anjana tried her best to defend herself, but the lady would listen nothing nor look at the ring which belonged to her son. The ring only added to her fury.

—"Get out of my sight, ye harlot, get out at once. Ye must have stolen it or picked it up somehow and now ye

produce this as a proof of your chastity ! Do I not know what the attitude of my son has been towards you all these years ? And how did he behave towards you on the day of his departure ? And now do you mean to tell me that he loves you and he came to your apartment ? I don't want you to stay here even for a moment. You get out at once."

All the entreaties and requests were curtly turned down and the queen only repeated :

"You get out at once. You talk of permitting you to stay at the palace, but I won't permit you to stay within the boundary of my kingdom even. I must now arrange for your expulsion."

The queen went straight to the king and reported, adding,

"I wish, Your Majesty, Anjana be deported at once, in a black veil and on a black chariot, and dropped in some dense forest near her parents' home "

The king agreed He did not think it necessary even once to look into the matter himself before passing such a cruel order.

When Anjana came to know of the further worsening of her luck, she nearly broke down. She had suffered misery for long twelve years when she was neglected by her husband ; but she could never guess that half-a-night's meeting with him could be so very pernicious for her. She felt most miserable but she must get ready to face the situation, howsoever bad She gathered courage, covered herself with a black veil and sat on a black chariot.

She was taken to a dense forest and asked to alight. It was no easy job even for the charioteer to check his tears. But he was a slave unto the king's order. He expressed his sense of horror and regret, but at the same time he confessed his utter helplessness.

Anjana calmly alighted from the chariot and thanked the man for his kind words. She asked him to entertain no fear or anxiety on her own score. For, she would henceforth be under the protection of the Five Great.

"Noble lady !", said the charioteer. "This road leads straight to Mahendrapur. You may like to take this road."

The charioteer went away. Anjana and Vasantatilaka spent the night in the forest, and in the the morning, they took the road leading to Mahendrapur. But when a woman has been turned out from her own home, she rarely gets a shelter in her parental home. When King Mahendra heard the full story, he became extremely angry.

"She has stained her own family line and now she comes to seek shelter with me ! She should have been ashamed even to think of coming here."

Her own brother Prasnakirti went a step further,

"A finger bitten by the snake must be amputated at once. It deserves no protection."

But the minister tried to argue :

"Your Majesty ! A girl who is turned out from her father-in-law's house normally expects shelter with her own parents. In my humble opinion, Anjana should be received and sheltered, at least till the prince comes back. Queen Ketumati is well-known at mischief-making and should not be taken very seriously Considering the girl's future, I urge, you change your mind "

But the king's mind was a closed chapter and the minister's words made no impression on him. Justifying his stand, he said,

"Queen Ketumati could have told a lie. After all, it touched her own family. But it is well-known that Pavananjaya had no relation with Anjana He never came to her even once during long 12 years. And at the time of his going out, he insulted her in public. How can it be that all on a sudden, he changed his mind and came to her apartment ? I am, therefore, not prepared to listen to any argument on this point. I cannot shelter a sinful creature. She may be turned out from where she is. I do not want to see her face."

When one's evil stars are up, everyone turns his back on him or her. This happened to Anjana. Her parents did not receive her ; her brothers and their wives turned their back on her and did not as much care as to look at her. So the two ladies once again returned to the forest and took shelter there. Days passed in this way.

One day, they met a great monk and Anjana expressed a curiosity to know about her past. Revealing this, the monk said,

"Kanakratha was the king at Kanakpuri. He had two queens named Kanakodari and Laksmivati. Kanakodari gave birth to a son, but somehow Laksmivati stole the new-born child and kept it in hiding Kanakodari was very much in distress at the loss Now, a pious neighbour reasoned with Laksmivati that she had done a very wrong thing in hiding the child from the mother. And after 12 hours, she returned the child in an angry mood But Laksmivati was not inherently bad. She propitiated the gods, preceptor and religion, and so after death she was born in Saudharma-kalpa. Having exhausted her life-span in that celestial abode, she is born now as Anjana, But the *karma* of her previous birth was affixed on her soul It has now attained maturity, and so 12 hours have become 12 years"

Turning to Vasantatilaka, he added,

"You were her sister at that time, and you had approved of her misdeed. Your *karma* has also come up, and so you too are suffering with her But the hardest part of your time is nearing its end, and it will gradually improve hereafter. Then the great lady's chastity and firmness will shine in full brilliance. The lady's maternal uncle will soon come here and will take you both to his palace where you will spend some time. Then you will meet with Pavananjaya."

Anjana and her friend continued to live in that forest waiting for the time when fortune might take a turn for the better. In the same cave, a son was born unto Anjana, and the lady had more sorrow than joy. No ceremony could be organised in that forest to receive the new child. It was about this time that a *Vidyadhara*, Pratisurya by name, saw

the ladies from the air and thought that they might be in some difficulty. So he descended to help them out.

Vasantatilaka looked at him and made sure that this was no villain. As the *Vidyadhara* heard the lady's account from her friend, he said,

"My daughter ! I happen to be your maternal uncle. I cannot leave you here like this. The world has turned itself against you. This has been the greatest wrong. But I cannot leave you in this wilderness. You must come with me. I invite you and welcome you."

Anjana was overwhelmed at the warmth of his feeling and she accepted the invitation. This was also predicted by the monk They were now on the chariot which moved through the air. As the chariot moved, its bells tinkled, and, attracted by their sound, the boy gave a jump to get them. But he slipped from there and fell straight on a mountain Anjana was alarmed that the child must have been smashed to death But when the *Vidyadhara* came down, he found to his greatest surprise that there had been no fracture even and the child was heartily smiling taking credit for the high jump. A few slabs of stone were, however, crushed under the child's weight. The uncle predicted a great future for the boy, declaring him to be a prodigee.

Back to his own city, Hanupur, the *Vidyadhara* celebrated the child's birth with the greatest pomp. As the mountain had been crushed under his weight, the boy was named Silachur. As per the name of the city, however, he was named Hanuman. As the *Vidyadhara* held a very high opinion about Anjana, she was revered in the whole city. Anjana's hard days were at last over. She was living comfortably at the *Vidyadhara's* palace, waiting for the arrival of her own husband.

Elsewhere, Pavananjaya fought against Varuna and showed his great skill. He was given the supreme command and inflicted the severest defeat on the adversary. Ravana's generals who had been held captive were now released. Ravana was delighted and charmed with his valour and showered on him the highest panegyric. He took him to Lanka

to spend a few days with him as his guest and thereafter, crowned with many laurels, he came back to his own city.

On Pavananjaya's return, there was a great rejoicing in the city. His parents, the king and the queen, received him and blessed him. But when he made enquiries about Anjana, they started looking at each other's face. Pavananjaya could easily guess that there had been something wrong about her during his absence, and he had a feeling that he might never meet her again.

The king had now no alternative but to apprise him all about her. The moment he heard the word 'exile', a pang of sorrow overtook him, in which faded away his joy of victory. Pavananjaya rushed to Mahendrapur but even here the same story was repeated

In the greatest despair, Pavananjaya moved out on an uncertain search of his dear wife. He searched all the forests he passed through, he searched even the smallest of caves he came across. Now, he was physically exhausted and mentally worn. He had only one resolve—to find out Anjana, or to lay down his life in her quest.

Acute love is the obverse of acute hatred. Once, Pavananjaya had the acutest hatred for Anjana ; but now he had the highest love for her Without her, life had no meaning for him

When the news of Pavananjaya's resolve reached the ears of his parents, they came all the way to dissuade him somehow from this resolve They promised him an all-out search for the lady if Pavananjaya would give but a month's time. The prince gave a smile of despair and said,

"Do you think I haven't done my best to find her ? Had she been alive, I would surely have met her. Then why do I make myself more miserable by waiting for a month !'

The king—"Surely you have done your best ; but since I am involved too, I must be given a chance to do what I can for tracing Anjana out. Wise people never do a thing in a hurry. Sometimes a goal is attained after many failures."

Pavananjaya could not disoblige his parents. He agreed.

Now, both King Prahlada and King Mahendra sent hundreds of emissaries all over the world in search of the great lady. In this manner, 29 days passed, and there was no ray of hope from any quarter to save Pavananjaya. It was now the thirtieth day. Pavananjaya stood firm to enter into a blazing pyre the moment the day was out. There was deep despair on everybody's face.

Just then an air-chariot appeared in sight. It so happened that an emissary had gone to Hanupur, and finding Anjana there, he communicated the need of urgency of their return, lest Pavananjaya should end his life on the expiry of the thirtieth day. Hence the whole party hurried at once and reached the spot in time.

Anjana's parents and parents in-law shed tears, but these were tears of regret. Anjana consoled them saying that all this was the outcome of *karma*, in which they were merely instrumental. There was for them really no reason to repent.

And between Anjana and Pavananjaya, this was a supreme moment, a great reunion They could hardly open their lips At last Pavananjaya broke the silence.

"I made you miserable for long 12 years "

"But now you were about to sacrifice your life for my sake." Anjana retorted.

Now, as the person who had given shelter to Anjana and her child, and saved the live of Pavananjaya, Vidyadhara Pratisurya had the greatest claim on Pavananjaya. He invited him with his wife and son, his own parents and his wife's parents to be first his guests of honour at Hanupur. The invitation was accepted.

Now, it was time for Mahendra to lay down the reins of office in favour of his very capable and worthy son. Pavananjaya had a very glorious regime, towards the close of which he too renounced the world to devote the remaining portion of his life in spiritual activities The great lady Anjana practised severe penances and at last courted death in the prescribed Jaina way through a long fast.

Among traditional Indian womanhood, with Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Anjana's too is a great name, and she is remembered to this day with the greatest respect and admiration.

5. NARMADA SUNDARI

In the city of Vardhamana there reigned a king named Samprati Sarthvaha Risabhasena lived in the same city. He had two sons, named Sahandeva and Viradasa and a daughter named Rishidatta by his wife Viramati In course of time. Rishidatta stepped into her youth Many suitors came from top business house-holds to seek her hand, but as none of them was a follower of the Jaina path, the Sarthavaha refused them all

Stresthi Rudradatta of Chandrapur once came to Vardhamana One day, as Radradatta was passing from beneath Rishabhasena's house, his eyes fell on Rishidatta who was seated at the window At once, he felt a fascination for the young lady. He could go no further and was determined to have her His friend Kuveradatta who was with him saw this He made enquiries about the lady and told his friend that she belonged to an orthodox Jaina household and that she was the daughter of one Sarthavaha named Rishabhasena. He further informed his friend that till he was converted to Jainism, he stood no chance of getting the young lady.

Rudradatta laughted at his young friend and said,

"Friend ! You are not yet fully acquainted with my wit. This lady I must have at any cost, and for this I must use all stratagems. You will see soon that I am successful in my project."

The two friends went their respective ways. Rudradatta came straight to the abode of the Jaina monks He established intimate contract with them, and read the fundamentals of Jainism. He picked up Jaina practices too. All this he did not to become a devout Jaina but to get that beautiful lady to whom he had forfeited his heart. Soon his objective was realised. Rishabhasena was very

much impressed by the ardentness of the young man, and he settled his daughter in marriage with him.

The success of his stratagem made Rudradatta exceedingly happy. This was indeed a matter of great surprise for Kuveradatta but he did not lag behind in congratulating his friend on the attainment of his desired objective. Having spent sometime at the father-in-law's house, Rudradatta returned to his own city Chandrapur. Rishidatta also came with him. Once back to his city, he gave up the Jaina practices, Rishidatta remained firm on the Jaina path for some time. but gradually she lost her steadfastness in an alien atmosphere and followed the way of her husband's family. She gave birth to a son who was named Mahesvaradatta. The son grew up to become a fine young man.

Sahadeva was Rishidatta's elder brother. Sundari was the name of his wife. Once she desired to take a dip in the Narmada. So Sahadeva collected some merchandise and reached the bank of the Narmada with his wife. Sundari's heart's desire was thus fulfilled. Sahadeva too had a tremendous turn to his fortune. He earned a fabulous income and founded a city on the bank of the river which was named Narmadapuri. After sometime, a daughter was born to them She was named Narmada Sundari.

When Narmada Sundari stepped into her youth, the news of her beauty went far and wide. Many young men desired to have her as their wife. When the news reached the ears of Rishidatta, she desired to have the girl as the bride for her own son Mahesvaradatta. But she remembered at once that her family was not in the Jaina path, and that the union would, therefore, be next to impossible. At once, there was a drop of tear in her eye. Rudradatta noticed this and asked about its cause. When Rishidatta expressed it in so many words, Mahesvaradatta who was present said,

"Mother ! Have no anxiety on this score. I shall myself go there to have her and to fulfill your desire. I am sure, through your good-wishes, success will be mine."

Mahesvaradatta lost no time. He came at once to the house of his maternal uncle Sahadeva and settled with him to help him in his business. Soon he won his heart. In every work, he took the lead and accomplished it with success. Sahadeva had now a great affection for his sister's son. Mahesvaradatta was an intelligent man. He did not forget establishing contact with Jaina monks and picking up the Jaina practices Soon he was conversant with them and was regularly practising them. This was an additional reason for his becoming a great favourite with his uncle who had never an inkling of doubt in the honesty and sincerity of the young man This helped him in making the final decision about Narmada Sundari whom he bestowed on Mahesvaradatta as his wife. Thus the young man's promise to his mother was fulfilled. He spent a little more time with his new father-in-law and then in the company of his wife, he came back home.

Narmada Sundari was now settled in her new home. Nothing was wanting there—neither wealth nor status, but still she did not feel happy. For, she could not reconcile with the atmosphere of the household wherein everyone was averse to the Jaina path. Even Mahesvaradatta proved to be no exception to this. She felt that she had been deceived. But her mind revolted at the idea of submitting to the new situation. Yet she was not rude nor harsh to anyone. She thought of gathering courage and improving her own position. She was loved by everybody in the household. So very softly she started discussion on the fundamentals of Jainism with other members of the family whenever she got a chance, and in this manner, she sought to establish the superiority of the Jaina tenets in a pursuasive manner. Soon the members of the family were convinced by her logic and became converted to the Jaina way.

One day, Narmada Sundari was standing at her window in a mood of absent-mindedness. She was chewing *pan*. Suddenly, she dropped her saliva mixed with *pan* juice. Just at that time, a *nirgrantha* monk was on the highway beneath the window. The saliva fell on his head. This caused irritation to the monk who said,

"In a haughty mood, you have disrespected and defiled a monk. In consequence, in future, you will be separated from your husband."

As these words reached the ears of Narmada Sundari, she was terror-stricken. She looked below, and as she saw the monk, she started trembling in fear and anguish. At a hurried pace, she came down to make atonement for her fault. She fell at the feet of the monk and begged to be forgiven. In a very normal tone, the monk said as follows :

"Lady ! I have no malice or anger against you. The words came out without any conscious effort. You need not take them seriously, nor feel any apprehension on their score."

So saying, the monk went his own way. Narmada Sundari came back to her apartment.

Premature display of expertise often becomes a source of agony. Once Mahesvaradatta set out on a voyage to distant lands. Narmada went out with him. They were on board the ship seated in their cabin. It was night time. Somebody was singing a song at the next cabin. Narmada Sundari was an expert in voice-reading and she desired to take this opportunity to apprise her husband of her special capacity. So she said,

"Sir ! I say that this is the voice of a man who is dark in complexion and lean in stature His hands and feet are thick and he has a large heart and a dark spot on the penes. He is 22."

This was a shock for Mahesvaradatta who did not like the observation. He paid no attention to what she said. He was now thinking that a woman who kept information about the secret parts of a man's body must be a harlot. He no more relished the company of her and was bent on getting rid of her as early as possible.

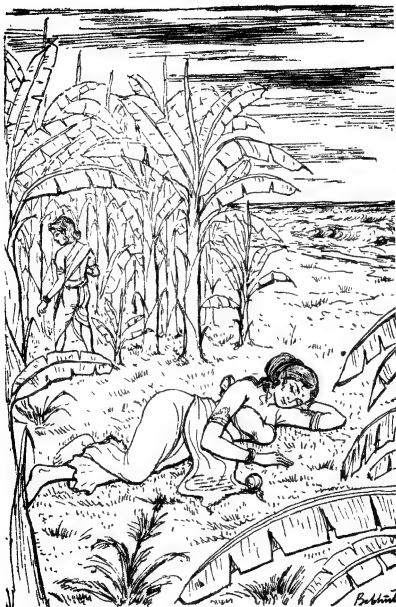
In the morning, Mahesvaradatta made enquiries about this man and got a corroboration of everything spoken by Narmada Sundari. This confirmed his belief that she was a woman of a loose character. He felt very seriously that he

needed her no more, and he must cut off all connections with her. To him, she was no better than a poisonous creeper, and he must immediately uproot her and cast her aside. The sooner he did it, the better for him. But he did not reveal his mind to his wife and kept waiting for a suitable plan and an appropriate chance.

The ship proceeded piercing through the water. After a few days, they reached an island of man-eating monsters. The ship cast anchor to collect water and fuel Mahesvaradatta alighted from the ship, and so did Narmada Sundari. Both of them reached a forest of banana trees where they sat down to rest. Narmada Sundari felt drowsy, and was soon fast asleep This was a good chance. Ever since he felt bitter about her, he considered various alternatives of discarding her Sometimes he thought of administering poison to her. Sometimes he thought of pushing her into the water. But he could not make up his mind. But now was the opportunity ready at hand He discarded her in the midst of a deep slumber in the banana forest and reached his ship. He told his men with a feigned sorrow that his wife had been carried away by a monster and had been devoured and that he had managed to escape with great difficulty. He asked them to quit the place at once lest the monsters would follow them, in which case, none would remain alive. So pretty early in the morning, the ship set sail.

This was done, and in the morning, the ship started moving Mahesvaradatta heaved a sigh of relief at the ease with which he could get rid of her So goes the maxim, 'The snake has been killed, but the stick is in tact.'

Mahesvaradatta visited many lands, earned much wealth and returned home. His people were very happy to see him back. When they made enquiries about Narmada, he gave them a horrible account of how she had been taken away by a monster and killed. This created a spell of deep sorrow for all But time is the best healer and after some time, Mahesvaradatta took a new wife, and in the new joy of life, he forgot all about Narmada Sundari.

In her sweet slumber, Narmada enjoyed many a dream,

He discarded her in the midst of a deep slumber in the banana forest.

but she knew not that the world had meanwhile changed for her. When she opened her eyes, Mahesvaradatta was not there. She called out his name but there was no response. She got up and looked for him, but he was no where to be found. She was now alarmed. In a helpless mood, with tears in her eyes, she was now aimlessly wandering in the lone island. Even animals shed tears for her, and expressed sympathy at her distress. Addressing her absent husband, she said,

"I placed my life into your charge which you gladly accepted. Why then have you deceived me like this ? If you did not like me, you could have easily killed me. Even that would have been more bearable for me than this treachery. What harm did I do unto thee ? How did I incur thy displeasure ?"

While bewailing like this, she turned her steps towards the sea She stood now on the sea beach. But the ship was not there. She had no doubt that she had been conciously discarded. She fell down unconscious on the beach. When she regained her senses, she could no longer bear the burden of this life, and was gathering courage to put an end to it. She decided to enter into the sea. Now, she stood beside the waves Suddenly, she had the realisation that escapism did not and could not end misery. One could very well put an end to one's life, but that would not liberate one from the bondage of *karma*. Till it was exhausted or uprooted, it pursued the soul from one life to another. Her inner voice asked her to concentrate all her energy to exhaust the roots of *karma* and strike it out. So she gave up the idea of putting an end to her life and came back to the beach.

Seated on the shore, she cast a glance backward. Uppermost in her mind was the question, 'Why did my husband discard me ? What *karma* did I bind to see such an evil day ?' Then she remembered the words of the *nirgrantha* monk, 'You shall be separated from your husband.' Was the present situation the outcome of the monk's words ? She was by now largely reconciled to her position. She realised that her own *karma* was at the root of all this misery. So she now blamed none except her own luck.

Slowly she got up and moved to settle on the island waiting for a chance to move out from there. She created a thatch for her stay, and devoted her entire time to spiritual practices. She lived on in this manner in the company of wild animals depending on the fruits of the forest. One day, as Narmada Sundari stood on the beach, a few ships arrived there and cast anchor. And who did alight from the ship but her own uncle Virdasa who was on his way to Babbarkul. He recognised Narmada at once and proceeded towards her. He consoled her with affectionate words, and asked her about her story. Narmada tried her best to master patience, but tears shot forth through her eyes. In that state, she gave an account of all that had happened to her. Virdasa was shocked. He consoled her as best as he could, took her with him in the ship and moved farther on.

Virdasa reached Babbarkul and called on the king. He gave many gifts to the king and obtained permission to trade. So Virdasa settled there for some time. Narmada was with him.

Now, in the same city, there lived a fallen woman named Harini. She was the foremost woman of the city in beauty and stratagem. The king was very favourably disposed towards her As per authority bestowed on her by the king, she was entitled to a payment of one thousand gold coins from all incoming foreign merchants. When she came to know of Virdasa's arrival to the city, she sent her maid to him asking for the aforesaid amount. The maid arrived at Virdasa's residence There she saw Narmada Sundari and was charmed at her grace. She went back at a quick pace and reported about Narmada to her own mistress. Harini was now almost mad and determined to get her. This would open a great prospect of money-making for her.

As she sat hatching a plan for this purpose, Virdasa arrived to her house to make the payment. This was a good chance for Harini She cast her spell on him and took no time to overpower him. Harini managed to get a ring from him with his name imprinted on it. This was a gift for

her hospitality. With the ring in her hand, Harini's plan got its wings.

Elsewhere, Narmada Sundari was looking into her own future. She was hopeful that the days of her misery were nearing their end. But she did not know that destiny was preparing fresh snares for her. As Virdasa moved out from Harini's home, she commissioned her maid to go to Narmada at once with Virdasa's ring, show it to her, and bring her at once to her abode. The maid acted as per the order of her mistress. She showed the ring to Narmada and asked her to come at once with her

Narmada had no reason to doubt any conspiracy after she had seen the ring So she came to Harini's house Harini was pleased to see her. Her plan had acted so easily Narmada was at once conducted to an underground chamber where she was confined Harini was now building castles in the air about her own future prosperity.

When Virdasa returned home, he did not find Narmada there. He became anxious and searched all the corners of the house But the situation did not improve At once, he remembered that he had given his ring to the harlot Now, he had no doubt that she was at the root of the whole mischief So at a hurried pace, he arrived at her house. But Harini flatly denied any knowledge of her So Virdasa came away exceedingly disappointed. Having failed to recover her, he left the place in shame and disgust.

Meanwhile, Harini tried her best to induce Narmada to join with her in her profession. Narmada flatly refused. First, inducements were offered and then lashes. But Narmada would not yield. Unfortunately Harini died the same day. As the report of her death spread through the city, people had no doubt that this was the outcome of Harini's behaviour towards the newly arrived woman They had no doubt that this woman was very chaste and the city-folks now held her in the highest esteem. At Harini's death, Narmada won back her freedom. But as she had nowhere else to go, she continued living in the same house.

Meanwhile, dejected Virdasa reached Vrigukaccha, but he could not forget the tragedy of his life even for a moment. There he became friendly with one Jinadasa to whom he narrated the story of his mental distress. On hearing the account, Jinadasa said,

"Unless she is dead or has escaped by some chance, I am pretty sure that she is still in detention with that fallen woman. But mere diligence is not enough to recover her. It must be supplemented by intellect. But don't you worry. I am going myself, and I am sure that I shall be successful in my mission" For Jinadasa, it was no difficult job. He came to Babbarkul and went straight to the house of the harlot. Narmada was there. He introduced himself as the friend of Virdasa. To win her confidence, he gave her a complete account of her uncle and informed her of the circumstances under which he had come there in search of her. When Narmada was convinced that this was no fresh snare, she started with him and reached Vrigukaccha There she was united with her uncle Virdasa who took her to his own home Narmada was henceforth living in her uncle's house, happy and safe, and spending her days in spiritual practices.

Once a wise monk had come to that city. Many people assembled at the city park to listen to him. Virdasa and Narmada too had come. After the discourse was over, Virdasa made the following submission :

"Oh monk ! How is it that such an accomplished lady as Narmada Sundari underwent so much hardship and harrassment in her life ?" Said the all-seeing monk :

"It is all due to the bondage of *karma* acquired in the previous birth. In her previous birth, she was the presiding goddess of the river Narmada. Once a monk arrived on the bank of that river. He was already bearing great hardships. Out of sheer fun, the goddess created further hardship for him. But the monk remained firm in his way. At last, the goddess admitted her defeat and begged to be forgiven. Henceforth, the goddess rooted herself in equanimity and led a very pious life. The same goddess is now born as

Narmada Sundari. But because of the bondage of her past *karma*, she had to undergo so much trouble in this life."

On hearing this touching account of her previous birth, Narmada Sundari had at once a revival of her memory of that life and she could see that all that the monk had said was correct. She decided now to spend the rest of her life in the monastic order. Accordingly, she was initiated in the order of nuns. In that order, she studied 11 *Angas*, the oldest canonical texts, and practised various penances. In the course of her wanderings, once in the company of nuns, she arrived to her own city Chandrapuri. People came out to listen to her. The assembly included members of her own family, including her husband and father-in-law. But none of them could recognise her. But nun Narmada recognised them all. The topic of her discourse that day was 'the technique of voice-reading.' She spoke at length on this topic illustrating it from her own experiences with it. On hearing this, Mahesvaradatta's mind went back to the day when his own wife Narmada Sundari had said some such thing which he did not care to believe If what the nun had said be correct, then, thought he, he had done a very wrong thing in discarding her in a lone island. He could check himself no more and said,

"Great nun ! I had my first wife who was an expert in voice-reading. But I could not appreciate her and gave a wrong interpretation of her expertise. At last, I gave her up in a lonely island. I do not know what may have happened to her there. But after hearing you, I feel, I have done a very wrong thing."

—"Have patience. I am the same person just referred to by you."

—' Can it really be so ! Am I so fortunate as to set my eyes on my dear wife again ?"

—"Yes, sir, what I say I mean."

At this point, the great nun gave an account of the past, high-lighting points which none except the husband and the wife alone knew. Mahesvaradatta was now fully convinced.

that this great nun was none other than his own dear wife, Narmada Sundari. He fell at her feet and begged to be forgiven. At this, said the nun,

"This was none of your fault but the operation of my own *karma*. I could not have escaped it in any case. But now my *karma* is nearly exhausted and none can make me suffer any further. Have no repentance for what has already receded into the dead past."

The words of the nun had a great impact on Mahesvaradatta. He was now anxious to retire from household duties and join the holy order of monks. This he did, living the remaining part of his life in a very worthy manner. Thus he acquired great merits which entitled him to heaven after death.

6. MADAN AND DHANADEVA

There lived a merchant named Madan in the city of Kusasthalpur He had two wived—Chanda and Prachanda. Both were very much true to their names. Madan made a fair distribution of his love between them, but they were so very quarrelsome that they fell out on even flimsy grounds. In such a household, there could be no peace. He tried his best to make his home an abode of peace, but he was unsuccessful. At last he thought, if these ladies could be put up in two separate villages, that might perhaps help. Chanda stayed where she was, and Prachanda was given a house in a neighbouring village. He himself divided his days between the two wives

A quarrelsome person does not care for the sentiment of others. He wants others totally subdued to his wishes, slave unto himself. Even a slight deviation from this position causes him the greatest irritation. One day, due to some unforeseen business, Madan stayed a little longer with Prachanda. When he came to Chanda, she was all afire and she hurled a mace at him Madan ran away as fast as he could. After he was safely off, he looked back, and he saw that a snake was pursuing him Terrified, he doubled his speed, and reached Prachanda's home. When she came to know all this, she consoled him and asked him to rest. Very soon the snake reached the door of her house. Thereon Prachanda gathered her body dirt, made small pills from them and hurled them at the snake. Soon these pills changed into a mongoose and it tore the snake into pieces.

Thus Madan was saved. He was grateful to Prachanda for saving him. But then he thought,

'I am safe now. But I am in the grip of monsters. If some day, on some pretext, Prachanda is angry with me,

then what will happen to me ? So it is advisable that I liberate myself of both.'

One who has received a shock in life is nerve-shaken. Madan saw a dark future for himself in the company of Prachanda. He felt very much insecure. So he collected some money and silently crept out of the house one day.

He walked on and on and arrived at a park in the city of Sankasa. He was already tired. So he stopped to rest. As he was thinking about the future course of his life, a merchant named Bhanudatta arrived there. Welcoming Madan he said,

"Sir, you are most welcome to my house. In fact, we have been expecting you."

Madan was hesitant to accept the hospitality of a stranger. But the request was too pressing to be brushed aside. After taking his bath, meal, etc., he sat down for a little chat with the merchant. In the course of the talk, Bhanudatta requested Madan to accept the hand of his beautiful daughter. It was indeed a strange proposal to a person about whom the proposer knew nothing. Madan could not answer immediately but was meditating silently trying to understand the mystery. Bhanudatta started.

"I have four sons and a daughter. My daughter's name is Vidyullata. She is proficient in all arts. Now she is grown up and it is but natural that we desire her to be settled in marriage. Last night, the family goddess appeared in a dream and said to me. 'Don't be worried. Attracted by Vidyullata's fortune, Madan is coming here and tomorrow morning, you will see him in the park. You marry your daughter with him and keep him with you.' So you see, my dear sir, how I have come to you at the command of the family deity. I am a stranger unto you, but you are not so to me, and so I have been able to make the proposal."

When the proposal came to Madan as a windfall, he could not decline. The ceremony was over. Bhanudatta gave him a beautiful house where he lived merrily with his wife.

There are occasions when nature becomes instrumental in pulling up hidden thoughts and emotions in us. It was the rainy season. The sky was covered with dark clouds Cool wind was blowing. Occasionally there were drizzles. Madan was at his window. Suddenly he heard the wail of some forsaken woman. He thought, 'It must be very woeful for those ladies whose husbands are not with them. I have forsaken my two wives and left them behind. They must be feeling very much lonely and aggrieved in this rainy season.'

These thoughts enkindled his lost love, and his eyes became moist. When Vidyullata saw this, she became inquisitive about the occasion for this sudden grief. Madan did not try to conceal his thoughts. The lady, however, concealed her feelings and said,

"Why don't you go to them ? That's your duty."

—"How can I unless you give me leave ?"

Vidyullata became jealous but did not appear so. She said,

"It may be difficult to go during this season. The roads must be very bad. Better go in autumn."

Madan agreed. Now, the rains were over and autumn had come Madan sought leave from his wife. Ladies are usually jealous of their co-wives. Vidyullata didn't prevent his going, but she made such a plan that she would have the thread in her own hand, and instead of getting away from her, he would all the more be attracted towards her like a flying kite. She gave him among other food items, some enchanted *karambas* to be taken during the journey. He set out happily, on the road to Kusasthalpur. At noon, he sat on the bank of a tank to have his lunch. Just then a *tapasa* monk came that way. Madan invited him to share the food with him. The monk accepted the invitation. All on a sudden, the monk was turned into a goat and it started moving towards the city of Sankasa. Madan was surprised. He began to follow it.

One surprising event paved the way for many others. The goat had now reached the house. Madan watched from a

She started beating him mercilessly.

safe distance outside the house. Vidyullata thought that her husband had come back as a goat. She started beating him mercilessly and repeated the following words,

"You villain ! You were eager to go to those unfaithful wives leaving behind a faithful wife like me. To save your skin, you gave up Chanda once and took shelter with Prachanda. Then you fled Prachanda and took shelter with me. Now you want to go back to the same ladies. An inconsistent wretch ! You have no balance. Now you are rightly served."

When it was half-dead on account of beating, the neighbours rushed in and saved him. Vidyullata then sprinkled some enchanted water on the goat and it turned into a monk The neighbours remained speechless at this sight. At last, they said,

"Holy sir ! How did you step in in such a contingency ?"

The monk described the whole incident. Vidyullata was trembling with fear. She thought, 'If the monk curses me, I shall be undone ' So she fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven.

This incident cast a deep shadow on Madan's mind. He turned his steps towards Hasantipur There was a park outside the city. Madan sat down there to take some rest in the temple of Lord Adinath Once again, the future was clouded with uncertainty. Just then a young man came to the same temple and sat down. He introduced himself as Dhanadeva. He asked Madan why he looked so sad and depressed. Without reservation, Madan gave him his full account. When Madan had stopped, Dhanadeva said,

"My friend ! Such a trifle has made you so sad. You won't as much be able to imagine the amount of woe that has befallen on me."

When two grief-stricken persons meet, they readily open their heart to each other. At a request from Madan, Dhanadeva gave the following account of himself :

"In this very city, there lived a merchant named Dhana-

pati. His wife's name was Laksmi. They had two sons, Dhanasara and Dhanadeva. The merchant educated the sons and married them with two beautiful girl. After the father had died, the two brothers happily lived on in a joint family. But the two wives were not on very good terms. When matters reached an extreme, the two brothers agreed to the partition of property amicably. But even this did not solve the problem. Dhanadeva was entirely dissatisfied with his wife. She did not give him a moment's peace. Under this situation, he accepted a suggestion of his elder brother and got married with another lady. Now, the first wife thought of teaching her husband a good lesson. She became very intimate with her co-wive and changed her to her own ways of life. So, Dhanadeva's peace was very short-lived and he became unhappy again.

"When a man is troubled too much by another, he tries to hit upon some loopholes in him so that he can pay him back in his own coins One day, Dhanadeva pretended to be unwell and lay down. Soon he began to snore loudly. The two wives were pretty certain that he was fast asleep. Both of them now got ready to go out and took their seats on a mango tree. When Dhanadeva came to know of their intention, he took shelter in the hollow of the tree unnoticed The tree carried the party to Ratnapur in the Ratna island. There they began to move in a very familiar way. Dhanadeva followed them unnoticed.

"Now, in that city, there was a merchant named Sripunja. He had four sons, followed by a daughter who was named Srimati. The girl was to be married on that very day. Now, as the groom stood under the gateway constructed for the occasion, it suddenly collapsed and he died. This was a great calamity. If the girl was now to remain unmarried, it would be difficult to marry her again. Sripunja was in a great dilemma. He sent at once some of his trusted men to the four corners of the city to see if some suitable groom could be found with whom he could settle the girl in marriage. One of these men saw Dhanadeva, and at once he took a fancy for him. Dhanadeva was young and beautiful. He was brought before Sripunja who at once

approved of him. Keeping in view the situation under which the request had come to him, he could not really decline. The marriage took place at the appointed hour.

"Meanwhile, Dhanadeva's two wives had come to the spot. They liked and praised the newly-married couple. But on closer observation, the younger wife said,

"Sister ! The fellow bears a striking similarity with our own man. Maybe this is he'."

The elder wife protested,

'Why ? There may be many persons with similar features, but that does not make them the same. We left him in the bed down with fever. How can he come here ?'

"The marriage ceremony was over in the midst of great rejoicing. Dhanadeva now came out from his father-in-law's house on some pretext and, before the return of his wives, he sat down in the hollow of the mango tree. After some time, the wives returned and climbed on the tree. The tree carried them back to their own courtyard. Dhanadeva crept out from the hollow stealthily and quickly put himself in his bed. The two wives remained ignorant of this and went to sleep."

"But actuality can never be kept hidden for long. In the morning, when the younger wife was engaged in her household duties, her notice was suddenly drawn towards a nuptial thread tied round Dhanadeva's wrist. Her last night's guess now seemed to her to be correct. She complained about it to the elder wife who became furious and exclaimed."

"'All right. He will have his reward very soon'."

"So saying, she enchanted a piece of thread and tied it round Dhanadeva's feet at the first available opportunity. Instantaneously, Dhanadeva was turned into a parrot."

"It was very natural for a human being turned into a bird to be afflicted with grief. Dhanadeva was no exception. The elder wife now mocked at him and said,

"'You fool ! You had made a nice pretence of fever

and were following us all the time. Now, you are duly served. You should have known beforehand what you would get from an encounter with me'."

"So saying, she caught the parrot and hurled it into a cage. Thus whatever little freedom Dhanadeva had was gone.

"The younger wife praised highly the elder one. Dhanadeva was passing his days in the cage in grief and despair. When the wives cooked food, they hanged the cage in the kitchen. When they poured vegetable into the frying pan, they threatened the parrot that it would be treated like that.

"Meanwhile, there started at Ratnapur an intensive search for Srimati's groom, who reportedly had disappeared. Search squads were sent in all directions, but no trace of him could be found. One morning, Srimati got a piece of verse which contained information to the effect that the man with whom Srimati had been married was one Dhanadeva, son of Seth Dhanapati of Hasantipur. Srimati passed on this information to her father, who now began to think of a plan to bring back his son-in-law.

"In the meantime, merchant Sagardatta was preparing to make a voyage to Hasantipur for business purposes. Sripunja considered it wise to avail of this opportunity. He sent with him a costly ornament and request to his son-in-law to come and take his wife with him. On crossing the sea, Sagardatta arrived at Hasantipur. He called at the residence of Dhanadeva but he was not there. His two wives informed him that he had gone abroad for business purposes.

"Sagardatta said,

" 'Seth Sripunja of Ratnapur has sent an ornament for him and has requested him to meet him in that city'."

"The two wives of Dhanadeva, who were very intelligent, said,

'Our husband was himself very eager to go to Ratnapur, but he has gone abroad on an urgent business. He has left word with us that if anything comes from Ratnapur, we are

to receive it and, in return, we are to send this parrot to his newly-wed wife'.

"Sagardatta could not comprehend the mind of these crafty women. He gave the ornament and took the parrot. On his return, he handed over the parrot to Sripunja and narrated everything in detail. Srimati was very happy to have the parrot and she spent much of her time in playing with it.

"When the period of misery is about to end, the course of events takes a turn in that direction. One day, as Srimati was spending her time in the company of the parrot, suddenly she noticed the thread tied round its leg. She became curious, and after pondering for a few moments, she tore it off. That very moment the spell broke down and Dhanadeva stood before her. Srimati became dumb-founded. She did not realise whether it was a dream or a reality and in utter bewilderment, she could not turn her gaze from him.

"Breaking her astonishment, Dhanadeva said in an assuring tone,

'My dear ! Everything before your eyes is true But please do not ask any question about it at this moment. The mystery will be clear at the right moment '

"The sudden appearance of Dhanadeva brought unprecedented joy everywhere in the house. He began to live at the father-in-law's place. Sripunja passed away after a few years, and the brothers' affection for their sister Srimati gradually waned. Now she began to request her husband to go back to his own place. But Dhanadeva went on putting it off on some plea or other. At last, when Shrimati seemed to be very much adamant, he narrated the entire incident and said at last,

'When I remember the scene of putting vegetables in the frying pan, even now I shiver with fear'.

"Srimati replied with full confidence in her voice,

'Don't you worry on that account. I know how to

tackle such a situation. None of the tricks of my co-wives will be effective with me.'

"On being repeatedly pursuaded by Srimati, Dhanadeva returned home with his wife. When his previous wives saw him come back in his true form, they expressed superficial joy and made preparations to receive him back. At the direction of his elder wife, the younger one began to wash Dhanadeva's feet. At this moment, the elder wife took some water from a copper jug and sprinkled it on the floor, At once, the floor was flooded from all directions. Dhanadeva looked at Srimati. She only made a sign—'Don't be afraid. I shall deal with it.' As the water came rushing up, he was drowned upto his throat, and now upto his nose He cried out,

'I am drowned Won't you save me yet ?'

"Srimati was well-versed in enchantments. She drank all the water at one sip The two co-wives were very much puzzled at this feat They fell on their knees before Srimati and acknowledged defeat This also brought about a change in their behaviour They devoted themselves whole-heartedly to the service of their husband and began to be more friendly with Srimati But one cannot save himself from the influence of the company he keeps This happened to Srimati. She could not avoid the influence of the two-co-wives, but fell a victim to their evil designs Dhanadeva became isolated. The three co-wives now made a group of themselves Utterly tired of them, one day Dhanadeva fled from the house "

Now giving a twist to his account, he said,

"Now tell me who is more miserable—you or I. You can imagine how very miserable I was as a bird."

Thus they were comparing the experiences of their life with each other, But their bad time was nearing its end. Acharya Bimalbahu came there. Being inspired by his sermons, both of them were initiated into the holy order. They practised sundry penances, and after death, they attained a celestial abode each in Saudharma-kalpa.

Having completed his life-span in heaven, the soul of Madan was born as son to King Samarsen of Vijayapur and

Queen Vijayavati. He took the name as Maniprabha. After the retirement of his father, Maniprabha became the king. He ran the administration with great efficiency for many years. One day he saw a lotus forest wholly dried up. This made a profound impact on his mind and he entered into the holy order. He acquired *avadhi* knowledge and the power to fly through the sky.

The soul of Dhanadeva was born as a Vidyadhara at Rathnupur-Chakravalnagar and took this name as Mahendrasingh. He became the ruler of that state and took the title of Chakravarti. The name of his wife was Ratnamala, and he had two sons by her who were named Ratnachuda and Manichuda. Ratnamala died of some incurable disease. This depressed Mahendrasingh to such an extent that he lost all interest in life. Monk Maniprabha saw this by dint of his *avadhi* knowledge and, because of his affection for his friend from the previous birth, he came to Rathnupur through the sky. Mahendrasingh came to him to pay his homage and obeisance. The monk tried to console him through his inspiring sermons. This to some extent restored peace to his mind. Whenever he looked at the monk, he enjoyed peace. One day, he asked him about his own previous birth when the monk narrated the complete story of Madan and Dhanadeva, and threw particular light on the character of the three ladies This ended Mahendrasingh's attachment towards his departed wife and he was now free to join the holy order. He entrusted the kingdom to his son, Ratnachuda, and got initiated at the hands of his friend, the monk. Both the monks henceforth practised severe penances, attained the supreme knowledge and were in the end liberated.

7. LALITANGAKUMAR

Once upon a time, there was a big city named Srivasa. Narabahana was the king of that city. He had a son who was named Lalitangakumar. The king loved him very much. He was given proper education.

From his childhood, Lalitangakumar was very pious. He took great interest in religious activities and he had a very sympathetic heart. If he saw anyone in distress, his heart was filled up with pity. He would give away whatever he had to help the needy. Many poor people of the city came to him, and none went empty-handed.

The prince had a fast friend whose name was Sajjan. His nature was just the reverse of his name. He would not tolerate anyone to be happy. Jealousy and revenge always dominated his heart. His frienship with Lalitanga too was more formal than real and he always tried to find loopholes in the character of his friend He never looked with admiration on the help that the prince rendered to the poor and the needy and he would often complain against the prince to the king.

Once it was the prince's birth-day and it was celebrated with great pomp and splendour. The king presented him with a very costly necklace inled with gems. The prince was very happy and placed it on his neck. When he was returning to his own apartment, he heard a beggar crying in the street. When the beggar saw the prince, a flicker of smile crossed his face The prince's heart melted and he gave away the necklace to the beggar. The beggar was pleased and blessed the prince and went away.

Sajjan watched this scene and his eyes started showering poison. He wanted to teach the prince a good lesson, and so he came to the king at once and narrated the incident

adding rhetoric of his own. The king became angry. He sent for the prince and said to him very sternly,

"My son ! Charity has a limit. If you go on making charity like this, you will empty the entire treasury in no time. You should know that I reign over a big kingdom and that is not possible without money. You must be careful in future. Everything is proper within limits I hope, in future, you will not repeat this sort of behaviour."

Lalitanga was very much distressed by these words. He decided to obey his father. On the next day, when beggars came to him, he did not give alms to all but gave to about hal the number In consequence, those who did not benefit, began to speak ill of him. The prince silently endured everything Henceforth, this happened everyday. Sajjan felt elated when he heard the prince being abused by a section of the beggars

One day, among the beggars, a garrulous person came to seek alms But his luck did not favour him So before he departed, he shouted,

"Oh prince ! You are a touch-stone but you are a miser too. How do you combine the two qualities ? Do not sacrifice the nobility of your heart. Your wealth will never increase this way. On the contrary, it will decrease together without with your fame. Nobody has ever gone away from your doors without receiving. Now, it is not proper for you to retreat from a donor's position."

These words of the garrullous beggar touched the heart of the prince. So he again started to give alms as before. Again he went high up in the estimation of the seekers. Sajjan was filled with jealous. He came to to the king and said,

'Sir ! Lalitanga has again started giving alms lavishly. He is thus violating your order. The treasury is going to be emptied very soon. Please take care of it."

The king became very angry at this report. He sent for the prince and said to him in a very threatening voice,

"Hallow ! You have been disobeying my orders ? How did you dare do that ? I won't stand this. My strict order

to you is that before the next sun-rise, you get out from my kingdom I may, however, permit you to live here on condition that you stop giving alms in future"

The prince returned to his apartment overburdened with thoughts. He was to make a choice of the position. Diverse thoughts came to him, but at last, he did not think it proper to obey the king blindly for fear of the trouble he would otherwise be in He took a firm decision as follows :

'It is better for me to live in the forest and face troubles rather than to submit to the unreasonable order of my father'

He took some ornaments with him from the vault, some provisions and departed on horse-back before sun-rise.

Sajjan came to know of the order of the king He also knew that the prince would give up the kingdom rather than give up his charities and principles So he acted speedily and hid himself in a roadside garden before sun-rise. As the prince rode by, Sajjan followed him from behind. Lalitanga did not perceive that. After he had gone a long distance, he stopped to rest beside a pond. Now, Sajjan reached the spot. The prince was very much amazed to see him there. He asked him,

"Dear friend ! What brings you here ?"

Sajjan replied with a false tone of endearment,

"When I came to know that you have been exiled from the kingdom, I could not remain quiet. I have come all the way to help you."

— "That's very fine. This journey will be a pleasure in your company."

The prince took out his provisions and both refreshed themselves. Then they started again. The prince said,

"My friend ! Start some topic so that we may not feel the strain of the journey."

— "Tell me whether virtue wins or vice."

—"What a silly question ? There is a universal agreement on this that virtue alone wins"

Sajjan protested,

'What you say is far from the common experience. In life, virtue never wins ; it is vice alone that wins. Had you given up your virtue, you would not have beenroaming in this dense forest alone."

Lalitanga explained.

"If virtue had any place in the heart of my father, he could never have given me this order."

The argument and counter-argument proceeded to the stage of a breaking point, when Lalitanga said,

"Well, let us consult a third party."

—"This I agree to but on one condition, which is that if I am proved wrong, I become your slave for the rest of my life ; but if you are proved wrong, your ornaments and horse will be mine."

The prince gladly agreed. On the way, they met an old man, and Lalitanga felt that this man would be suitable to arbitrate by virtue of his age and experience. So he repeated the problem in view, concluding :

"Sir ! Could you please tell us which of the two wins at last, virtue or vice ? "

The old man cast a deep sigh and said,

"My young friend ! Times have changed and vice is waxing, as virtue is waning. Bad people are leading a very comfortable life and the life of the good people is filled with grief and despair."

Sajjan was happy at this reply. Lalitanga, on the other hand, was deep in thought, Said Sajjan,

"So you see, what I had asserted has proved to be true. Now may I expect you to fulfil my condition ? "

Lalitanga was always true to his words. He gave away

the horse and the ornaments. Both started again on their journey. Said Lalitanga.

"What times we are in ! Contradictions in values are steadily on the increase."

Sajjan—"Well, let us ask a second man about our point. But what shall be the condition this time ?"

Lalitanga—"I have nothing more left with me which I may give. But if I am proved to be wrong, then, I shall give you my eyes."

Sajjan—"And if I lose, you get back your horse and ornaments."

Both proceeded onward. After some time, they met a man on the street. When Sajjan repeated the question to him, he said,

"It is vice that wins and virtue is always on the losing side."

Lalitanga was struck dumb and he cast a deep sigh. Sajjan said,

"My friend ! Will you give up your wrong ideas ? You should now agree with my view."

But Lalitanga could get no confirmation from within. He protested,

"No, that cannot be so. A sinful man may get something by chance, but the ultimate outcome is disastrous for him."

Sajjan laughed at him and said,

"You deserve to be congratulated for your firm stand. But what about the fulfilment of your condition ?"

Lalitanga—"Yes, my eyes now belong to you. Let us go to the yonder banyan tree. There I shall take out my eyes and give to you. I can assure you that I shall not hesitate or step back."

The two friends came under the banyan tree. Sajjan could not hide his joy and was waiting impatiently to get

the eyes of his friend. He felt no pity for him nor any penitence for such a vile act. Lalitanga addressed the gods and goddesses of the forest as follows :

"I am firm and unshakable in my opinion that it is virtue that wins, not vice Virtue is the protector of man. May I be sheltered in virtue !"

He chanted the holy *namokar*, took out his eyes with his own hands and gave them to Sajjan. Even this ghastly sight did not touch the cruel man's heart. He picked up the ornaments and rode away. Lalitanga lay alone under the banyan tree, He felt intense pain in the eye-pits, but continued uttering the holy *namokar* almost in a state of trance.

The sun was reclining to the west. Darkness crept all over the land-scape. Grazing animals were returning homewards. Birds were flying back to their nests. For Lalitanga, the world had already become dark.

In the evening, some *bharanda* birds came and perched on the branches of the banyan tree under which Lalitanga lay. They were talking among themselves. Lalitanga knew the language of the birds. So he began to listen attentively to their talk. Said a bird,

"There's a city named Champa which is to the east of this place. King Jitasatru of that city has a beautiful daughter named Puspavati. She is very dearly loved by his father. Unfortunately, she has become blind and this has made the king very sad Many eminent physicians have been consulted but to no effect. Seeing no way out, the king has proclaimed that anyone who will cure the eyes of the princess and restore her vision will be given half the kingdom and will be married with the princess."

The second bird said

"Is there any possible way of restoring the eye-sight of the princess ? "

The first—"I think, there is, and it is very simple and easy too. If someone mixes the juice of the creeper that has grown round and hangs from this banyan tree with our

"If some one mixes the juice of the creeper.......and applies it to the eyes, the eye-sight will at once be restored."

excreta lying on the ground and applies it to the eyes, the eye-sight will at once be restored."

Lalitanga was enlighted by this conversation of the birds. He thought of experimenting it on himself and if he was successful, then he should apply it to the eyes of the princess. He got up immediately and extended his hand towards the tree. He caught the creeper in his hand. He mixed it up with the excreta and applied the paste to his eyes. Very soon his sight was restored. With the restoration of his sight, he was happy again. He was grateful to virtue in which he had an unshakable faith. He put some creepers into his pocket and turned his steeps towards the city of Champa.

The king of Champa was eagerly awaiting the arrival of some perfected being who would cure his dear daughter. Now Lalitanga announced his intention to try it and was taken to the princess' room and within a few moments, she could see again. The king was very happy. He gave half the kingdom to Lalitanga and married his daughter with him. Lalitanga began to live happily in a splendid palace at Champa.

Happiness is followed by sorrow, as sorrow is followed by happiness. That is the way of life and both are initiated by different causes. One day, Lalitanga was sitting at his window. Suddenly, he saw in the street his old friend Sajjan dressed like a beggar. He was astonished and felt sorry for him. He asked his valet to usher him in Sajjan could not hide his surprise when he saw Lalitanga sitting in a splendid palace with his eyes in tact. Said Sajjan,

"My friend ! What stroke of good luck brings you here ?"

Lalitanga narrated his story and asked in turn,

"But how is it that you are moving in these tattered rags ? You took away everything from me. What has happened to them ?"

Sajjan's eyes were filled with tears. He said,

"Oh dear ! Mine is a very woeful story. I am so unlucky. Forsaking you in that pitiable plight, I went away, but no sooner had I gone some distance than robbers surrounded me. They snatched away the ornaments as well as the horse from me and beat me mercilessly. Since then I have been roaming here and there, and supporting myself by begging alms. Having passed through many villages and cities, I have come at last to this city. Forgive me, my friend, for all the harm I have done to you."

The heart of Lalitanga was filled with pity. He said,

"Don't you worry. You stay with me. But now you should change your view and outlook on virtue."

Sajjan agreed and stayed on. For some time, he lived properly, but again his wickedness was up. He was now acquainted with the king and took the first opportunity to poison his ears against his friend and benefactor. One day, the king asked Sajjan about the origin and nationality of his son-in-law.

Sajjan said,

"I am the son of King Narabahana of the city of Srivasa. Your son-in-law is also a resident of that city. But he has no family aristocracy He is just a commoner, belonging to a low caste. Once he met a sage who gave him the cure which he recently applied to your daughter's eyes. As per your own proclamation, he is now your son-in-law, but what else could you do ? As for me, I had some trouble in the family because of which I have left my home and have been wandering ever since. It was in this way that I reached this city. My friend recognised me at once. Lest I should reveal his true identity to you, he has made me live with him."

The king dismissed Sajjan. The very thought that his son-in-law was of a low origin tore his heart bitterly. He decided to get rid of such a son-in-law and began to hatch a plan for that. He sent for two of his faithful men and said,

"You are to keep watch at night outside Lalitanga's palace, and kill any person who comes out of his palace at 10 'o clock at night."

Then as evening fell, he wrote a letter addressed to Lalitanga asking him to come to the palace and see him at 10 p.m. on an urgent piece of business.

Lalitanga was now preparing to come to the palace. It was only a few minutes to 10. It was pitchy dark outside. Puspavati asked in a surprised tone.

"My dear ! Where are you preparing to go at this late hour ? "

—"Just now I have received a message from the king. He has asked me to see him at 10 on a very important piece of business."

—"No, you shall not move out at this hour of the night. See him to-morrow in the morning."

—"But it may be a very urgent business."

—"Well, your friend Sajjan is there. Send him to ascertain the nature of the business. If it is really urgent, then you go."

Lalitanga appreciated this advice of his wife. He sent for Sajjan and explained to him the whole position and added at last,

"So you hasten at once to the palace and see the king."

Sajjan was only too glad to get the opportunity to see the king. He felt elated and dressed suitably for the occasion. But as soon as he came out on the street, the two hidden guards applied their axe on him. With a loud cry, Sajjan fell on the spot and died. Drawn by the wail, Puspavati and Lalitanga rushed to the balcony, and even in that darkness, they could perceive that it was Sajjan's body that lay in a pool of blood on the ground.

Said Puspavati,

"Just see, my dear, what a conspiracy was this. Only if you had gone out ! "

Lalitanga became very angry with the king. He called in his own men and declared a war against the king to take revenge for the death of his friend. When the king saw that an internal feud was about to start at the palace, he felt

sorry. He asked his son-in-law to reveal his true identity which had been troubling him the most. Lalitanga, who was shaking with anger, said,

"What I am, only my arms will reply."

Minister Sumati handled the situation carefully. He saw Lalitanga and explained to him the cause of the king's concern about his son-in-law's background. This to some extent appeased Lalitanga. Besides, he could now see his friend Sajjan in a new light and he felt that he had been paid back in his own coins, an inherently wicked person that he was. This was followed by a visit from the king himself who begged to be forgiven for all that had happened

Jitasatru was highly impressed by the chivalry and nobility of his son-in-law. For many years, they lived together, after which the king handed over the highest office of the state to his son-in-law and courted monkhood.

Lalitanga was now eager to meet his father. Together with Puspavati, he came to Srivasa. The king was happy to see his son after so many years. He was also greatly impressed by his religious attitude and chivalry. He too handed over the throne to his son and joined the holy order

8. UTTAMKUMAR

Once upon a time, King Makaradhwaja reigned at the city of Varanasi. Lakshmivati was the name of his wife. Both of them were virtuous, benevolent and just. The people had the greatest regard for the monarch and the king was always kind to them. But unfortunately there was no son born to the king and so chances were that the line would end with him. After many years, however, a son was born and the king's wishes were thus fulfilled. The prince's intellect, conscience, beauty and intelligence were all of the topmost quality, because of which he was given the name Uttamkumar. On crossing the threshold of childhood, as Uttamkumar moved on to youth, his manliness and vigour began to grow steadily, as also did his personality.

One day, the prince was sitting in his palace absorbed in deep thought. He was dreaming about a happy future. The river Ganga was flowing within his sight. The prince's eyes were drawn to its serenity. Suddenly, some sweet music poured into his ears. Together with the melodious tune, the wording of the song also carried some meaning, so that the prince began to listen carefully. The song had the following purport :

It is fit and proper for a person to enjoy the property of his father during his childhood, but if he continues to do the same after 16, it only makes him lazy and good-for-nothing. He must travel far and wide to gather experience and learn more and more skills. He should depend only upon himself and try his own luck. He should never forsake the path of virtue and morality. He must at least once visit a foreign land."

This harmonious yet meaningful song pulled up the dormant feelings in the heart of Uttamkumar. His manliness was touched. The music had shown him the way and he

decided to try his luck. He took no time to dress himself up. But what about seeking the permission of his father, the king He knew that his father would, under no circumstances, allow him to go, but go he must. Should he then go without taking the permission of the king? This point almost raised a storm in his mind. But at last he took a firm decision to move out without taking the permission of the king.

On horse back, Uttamkumar left Varanasi before the sun was up He passed through many villages and cities and crossed many mountains and rivers. At last, after many days' ride, he reached a port named Bharuch. There lived a very rich merchant named Kuverdatta in that coastal town. He was preparing to go on a long voyage. He had collected many ships and was loading them with wares. As the merchant himself was supervising the loading at the port, his eyes fell on Uttamkumar who was passing by that way. He said,

"Hallo young man! Who are you? How have you come to this port?"

—"Seth! I am a prince. I left my own city with a view to gathering experience by travelling abroad."

—"If that be your desire, then come with me. The ships are ready. I have to see many lands to sell my things. I think, our company will be mutually profitable to us."

Uttamkumar too was looking for a chance and it had come so unasked for. He accepted the merchant's invitation. The voyage started. The ships had sailed over to a great distance. It was really an enjoyable voyage. But all on a sudden, a trouble arose. A thunderous sound became audible and all saw to their greatest alarm that a big monster was rushing towards them and shouting—"I shall eat you up." The passengers were half dead with fear. At this moment, Kuverdatta came to Uttamkumar and said,

"Brave young man! You are a ksatriya. If you show your skill at this difficult moment, we may all be saved."

Uttamkumar came forward with the sword in his hand. He challenged the monster. The fight continued for a long time. The attacks by the prince made the monster very furious and he rushed on him with double the speed. But the prince was very careful and he did not give the monster a single chance to strike on his body The monster was exhausted at last. He was feeling somewhat ashamed that he had been vanquished by an ordinary human being who was normally his food. But he could not stand for long and took to his heels The danger was thus averted and the passengers heaved a sigh of relief and showered heaps of praise on the prince.

The ships sailed on. The weather was fine and the passengers were happy. After they had covered a long distance, they found that they were short of drinking water. An old sailor said,

"At not a very great distance from this place, on an island, there is a well of sweet water. If we can go there, our problem will be easily solved." The ships were turned in that direction Soon they reached that place and the well was spotted. Poeple proceeded towards the well with their water-jugs in hand. They tried their best to draw water out of the well but all their efforts were in vain. On investigation, they found that the water was under a thick cover Efforts were made to remove the cover but it proved too hard to be removed or pierced through. People again came back to the prince and invoked his help. The prince agreed at once to help them He jumped into the well and, mobilising all his energy, he removed the cover. The problem of drinking water was thus solved.

Wherever Uttamkumar laid his hand, it turned out to be a success. As he was coming out of the well, he saw a doorway in the wall. The door was closed. He felt curious as to what might be behing the door. He broke it open, but could see nothing. So he stepped in and went ahead. Suddenly, he saw an old lady. Uttamkumar asked,

"Mother ! Who are you ?"

The very look of Uttamkumar seemed to please the old

woman. For, as soon as she saw the young man, a plan was suddenly formulated in her mind. It was the plan of marrying Princess Madalsa with him. It would make the princess happy and liberate her from the captivity of her father. She handled the situation with care. Before giving out her own introduction, she tried to get as much detail about the new comer as was possible for her. She asked him diverse questions and yet she had a curiosity—"This fellow looks like a prince " But the very next moment, she thought—"But why should a prince come at all to this place and draw water with his own hands ? "

The prince said all about himself, concluding his account as follows :

"You see, when my men could not do this, I had myself to go into the well. Then I saw this door. Out of curiosity and inquisitiveness I opend it and thus I am here. But I am surprised to see you. This has increased my curiosity all the more. Will you kindly tell me about the mystery behind this door ?"

The woman started,

"This is a rather strange story. You must have heard the name of the city of Lanka. The demon-king of that city whose name is Bhramaraketu has only one child, a daughter, whose name is Madalsa. Once the king came to know from a fortune-teller that the princess would be married to a human being. This made him furious and he cried out,

"Is there no demon left on this earth that my daughter will be the wife of a human being ? I shell never allow such a thing to take place."

With this determination, he constructed a beautiful palace on the sea coast and the palace has only one doorway. Princess Madalsa is a captive in the palace. Whenever any human being comes here, the demon-king comes out and kills him. Oh prince ! You look to be very brave. You have reached this place alive. I feel that you are perhaps the man chosen by destiny for the said princess. So I

have taken a fancy for you You come with me. I shall lead you to the princess' apartment."

The woman led the way and Uttamkumar followed her. He was amazed at the splendour of the palace. They were now inside a beautifully decorated room. Madalsa came forward to greet him. As Madalsa and Uttamkumar looked at each other, they fell in love at the very first sight. The woman now made the formal proposal and the two gave a silent consent. The marriage was performed according to the Gandharva rites. The lady was very happy at the smooth fulfilment of her duty. Her long-cherished desire was at last fulfilled.

The prince, accompanied by Madalsa and the woman, came back to his ship. Everyone was surprised at the valour and good luck of the prince. The couple was congratulated by all. The ships sailed on their voyage

Man's destiny is a curious mixture of extremes. When one extreme gets the upperhand, the other goes down and through this process of imbalance, many evil results creep in. When Kuverdatta beheld the beautiful Madalsa, he was full of lust for her. He deviated from his path of honesty and all his efforts were now directed to getting her by hook or by crook. He started calling on the prince very often and thus he got the chance of seeing Madalsa from very close quarters. Madalsa comprehended soon his ugly mind and said to the prince one day,

"This man in whom you have so much faith and trust appears to me to be a devil with a vile heart. Be careful of his company."

The prince did not pay much heed to her words. He said instead,

"No, you are wrong. The merchant is an honest man and he is honest to the core. Why do you doubt him for nothing ? "

A good man evaluates others by his own standard and the outcome in most cases is disastrous. Uttamkumar had

never doubted in the merchant's veracity, but the latter took undue advantage of his goodness. He began to dream of meeting Madalsa alone. But the presence of the prince made the fulfilment of his dream impossible. So he hatched a conspiracy to remove this obstacle from his path. One day, Kuverdatta went to a secluded corner of the ship and stood there. Then he called Uttamkumar and began to talk to him so intently that the latter's attention was diverted. Suddenly, the merchant pushed him into the sea.

For a pious man, even an adverse situation turns favourable. A man who is firm in religion and morality may temporarily be in difficulty, but in the end he comes out with flying colours. Trapped even in the greatest misfortune, he would find a way out by some means or other. As soon as the prince fell into the sea, a giant fish swallowed him up. Just then a fisherman threw his net and the same fish was caught into it. The fisherman was happy at the sight of the prize fish He rushed back home and pierced it. Out of the fish's belly came out a fine young man. He was, however, unconscious. The fisherman's quick effort restored him to full consciousness. From the man's dress and demeanour, the fisherman had no doubt that this man must be a prince or a man of noble descent and that due to some conspiracy or misfortune, he was in this miserable state When the prince regained his senses and was feeling normal, the fisherman asked him all about him. The prince narrated to him the story of his life. The fisherman felt pity as well as consanguinity for him. He did not let him go, but insisted upon his staying at his home as an honoured guest.

Now let us have a look at the scene on the ship. As Uttamkumar was pushed down into the sea, the merchant himself raised an alarm, shouting, "Uttamkumar has slipped into the sea." But no trace of him could be visible, and people on board felt sorry for him. Soon Madalsa came to know of the unfortunate event and started weeping bitterly. Her sorrow touched the heart of everybody except the merchant who spoke some superficial words in order to console her. Madalsa took no time to understand that

Kuverdatta was the real culprit. But she was helpless and remained silent.

After a few days had passed, Kuverdatta approached Madalsa and said,

"Madalsa, my dear ! Why are you so much aggrieved for one who is no more. There is no possibility of Uttamkumar ever coming back to life. But why should you make yourself miserable for him ? I am at your service. You accept me and all that I have will be at your feet."

Madalsa could anticipate this. Shaking with anger at his dirty intentions, she thundered,

"Merchant ! You are looking at me with lustful eyes, but your desire shall never be fulfilled. I am the brave daughter of a demon king and wife of a very powerful man on earth. Do you think I shall ever lay my eyes on such a filthy creature like you ? Keep yourself out of my sight, or you will suffer the consequences."

The merchant was not to be cowed down. He became furious and cried out in a very sharp voice,

"You haughty woman ! You should know with whom you are talking If you win my favour, you may be a fortunate woman ; but if I am angry with you, you will be without any succour. I have made a very polite request so far, but if necessary, I shall not hesitate to apply force even. You have no friend on this ship. All the people here are in service under me."

This open threat shook Madalsa. She realised that it was not wise for a person of inferior strength to fall out with a more powerful man. She changed the mode of her talk and tried to be more accomodating. She said,

"Merchant ! What you have said is correct and I realise my own situation. But I want to make a request. We should at least wait for ten days and see if Uttamkumar comes back. We should not do anything in haste or right now. For, anything done hastily and stealthily seldom su

After this period, we shall go to some court and, with the sanction from the king, we shall wed."

The merchant was pleased at these sweet and appeasing words. He thought that it was the threat he held that has yielded good result. This has even changed a chaste woman who has turned to him. He was more than sanguine that Uttamkumar could never come back. After ten days, the ship cast anchor at Morepalli and, as per her condition, both Madalsa and the merchant came to obtain the sanction from the king. Introducing himself, Kuverdatta said,

' Sir ! In the course of my voyage, I picked up this woman and, if you be so pleased as to permit, this woman is ready to marry with me."

The king looked at Madalsa and said,

"Sister ! Has the merchant said the truth ? Are you willing to marry him ? "

When the king addressed her as 'sister', Madalsa felt somewhat relieved and saw a ray of hope. She had a feeling that she might be protected by the king. So with folded hands, she said,

"Your Majesty ! Whatever the merchant has said is furthest from truth. I am the daughter of the demon-king Bhramaraketu. I was married to Uttamkumar, a prince from Varanasi. We were travelling with this merchant in his ship. In order to satisfy his amorous wishes, he pushed my husband into the sea. He wanted to use force on me. I have somehow saved my honour by promising to marry him after ten days with the permission of some king and, with that purpose, I have been brought to this court. I am already married and the question of my marriage again does not arise. I seek protection with thee. Please save me."

The king became furious at this revelation. He ordered that all the treasures and wares belonging to the merchant were to be confiscated and he was to be put into the jail. Turning to Madalsa, he said,

"I will henceforth address you as my daughter. You

will live at the palace with my own daughter Trilocana. I shall henceforth be responsible for your safety and well-being"

Madalsa was relieved. She was only looking for this much and this she had got. She started her new life with Trilocana, to whom she would often tell many beautiful stories. She was thus well provided for.

One day, a sad incident happened. Trilocana was taking a stroll in the garden along with her friends when a black panther suddenly appeared there and bit the young princess. With a loud shriek, the princess fell on the ground and became senseless. The matter was at once reported to the king. The king and other dignitaries of the court soon rushed to the spot. Doctors were sent for, but all their efforts to restore the princess to her senses failed The king became restless. The princess was carried to the palace in a palanquin. Doctors were attending on her, but all their knowledge of medicine proved futile.

The king issued forth a proclamation that anyone who would be able to cure the princess of the panther's poison will win her hand. But none responded, since it was no easy job. When Uttamkumar, who was residing in the fisherman's house in the same city, heard the proclamation, he decided to respond. He came to the court and offered to try his hand to cure the princess. He was taken to the room in which the princess lay senseless. Uttamkumar uttered the *namokar* and applied a gem that he had acquired from his wife Madalsa in the palace of the demon-king. This removed the poison and the princess moved on her side. After some time, as she was rid of poison, she sat up to the joy of the king and the entire royal household. The king fulfilled his promise and married his daughter with him. Uttamkumar was now allotted a beautiful palace where he started living with his newly married wife. Madalsa also joined the prince, her husband.

To celebrate the happy occasion of the restoration of the princess to life, the king released many prisoners, and Kuverdatta was one of them. Before leaving the city, he

was just wandering to see the places of interest when, all on a sudden, his eyes fell on Uttamkumar. In a great surprise, he thought,

"How is it that he is here? I pushed him down into the sea, and he is still alive and he enjoys the enviable position of being the son-in-law to the king!"

He was bent on taking revenge. He decided not to rest till he put an end to Uttamkumar's life.

Kuverdatta reached a garden outside the city. A flower-woman was picking flowers. Kuverdatta came to her and asked about her business. The woman said,

"I make garlands and boquets out of these flowers and sell them in the market"

—"Do you ever sell these to the king and his ministers?"

—"Oh yes, very often do I go to the palace. Besides, I sell my things to all big people and high officials here."

—"Do you know the new son-in-law of the king?"

—"Oh sure. Only the other day, he has been married to Princess Trilocana. I go to his palace too to sell flowers."

Kuverdatta now placed his gold necklace in her hand and said,

"Fine woman! I want you to do a special job for me Will you oblige me?"

With the gold necklace in her hand, the woman could not but agree. She said,

"You are such a fine man. How can I disoblige you? I shall do anything at the cost of my life even to help you. You tell me what is it that you desire to be done."

Kuverdatta felt safe to reveal his plan;

"This new son-in-law of the king, Uttamkumar, is my inveterate enemy. I do not want to see him alive. Can you finish him by some secret means?"

The woman was in a dilemma. She could not even dream of such a commission. Her heart trembled at the thought of killing an innocent person. The merchant comprehended her thoughts. He took out a few gold coins from

his pocket and placed them in her hand. The weight of gold was able to subdue the finer elements in her. She said,

"Seth ! Don't you worry. I shall go just now to Uttamkumar's palace. Every morning, Trilocana goes out to another palace to spend some time with her friend and Uttamkumar is alone. I shall go to him and present him with a boquet. I shall place an infant cobra inside the boquet. This will serve the purpose. Do you see ? "

Kuverdatta thanked the woman profusely and requested her to finish the job as quickly as she could. The woman prepared a fine boquet and took some loose flowers with her and went out. She took no time to reach Uttamkumar's palace. At that time, Uttamkumar had dressed to go out. The woman placed the boquet in his hand The prince began to admire it Suddenly the infant cobra came out and gave a bite on his hand The prince shrieked and fell down senseless. There was none else at the palace to help him.

In the same city, there lived a prostitute named Anangasena. By dint of her beauty and intellect, she had a great influence on many rich and distinguished persons. Once she saw Uttamkumar at the court and she was attracted by his beauty. She was thinking of entrapping him somehow. From that day, she often came to the palace and tried to establish intimacy with him As the flower-woman was moving out, Anangasena entered into the palace. Anangasena went up and was surprised to see the prince in that dreadful condition. His body had become blue and almost lifeless She could guess that the prince must have been bitten by a snake. Anangasena carried a gem with her which could remove the poison. She applied it at once. At the touch of it, the poison was removed from the body of the prince and he sat almost cured. He thanked the woman for saving his life and told her to ask for anything as reward, The harlot said,

"Oh prince ! I have lost my heart to you. I want you to marry me. That is all I ask of you."

The harlot said, "Oh prince ! I have lost my heart to you."

The prince could not refuse his benefactress. When Anangasena saw that the prince was within her clutches, she tied a thread round his neck and at once the prince turned into a parrot. Hiding the parrot in her dress, she took it out to her home. Henceforth, he lived as a parrot during the day and when, at night, the woman removed the thread from his neck, he became a human being enjoying life with her.

At this sudden disappearance of his son-in-law, the king was very much worried. He sent out his men to many places to search for him, but all his efforts were in vain. Being desperate, at last, the king issued forth a proclamation to the effect that any man giving news of the prince would be rewarded with the whole kingdom and would be married to Sahasrakala, the daughter of the Nagar-seth (town merchant).

One day, the cage of the parrot remained open due to carelessness The parrot flew out. It heard the king's proclamation. It flew to the palace gate and said to the people there,

"Tell the king that I am able to give information about his son-in-law."

The men at once informed the king. The parrot was taken before him. Everyone present at the court began to listen intently to the parrot who was speaking like a human being. The parrot gave a complete account, adding in the end,

"He is still living in the house of Anangasena. I have given you information about your son-in-law. Now, as per your proclamation, oh king, you hand over the charge of your kingdom to me and marry me to the daughter of the Nagar-seth."

People were surprised and were looking at the king and at each other. Some one said, "How shall the Nagar-seth marry his daughter with a bird ?"

Said a second man.

"Is it not surprising that a bird has so much information about the world of men ? "

But the consensus was—

"Let us see what the king does to solve the problem ?"

The king now said,

"Oh parrot ! How are we to believe without any direct proof that you are speaking the truth ?"

The parrot seemed to be aggrieved and insulted at these words and was about to fly away. But before doing that, he said sadly,

"Oh king ! I have nothing further to add if you cannot believe in what I have said I am sorry that I thrust my head in vain into all this trouble."

Madalsa came forward and said,

"Please don't fly away, oh parrot ! Tell us something which will prove the correctness of your words."

The parrot said,

"Well, I am here. You send some one to Anangasena's house to get all the information you want."

Immediately, at the king's order, men were sent to Anangasena's house. They searched every corner of the house, but they could find no trace of Uttamkumar there. The men came back in despair.

The king looked at the parrot and said,

"Parrot ! We have found nothing there to support you."

The parrot smiled, looked all around and said,

"Oh king ! You want proof. I am the proof. I am myself Uttamkumar. By some magical power, Anangasena has transformed me into a parrot. If you remove this thread from my neck, I shall regain my self."

The king arose and removed the thread and there stood the real Uttamkumar before them. Everyone was highly

astonished. The king became angry with Kuverdatta, the flower-woman and the harlot for creating this trouble and ordered severe punishment for them. Uttamkumar's earnest pleading, however, got their release.

According to the king's proclamation, Uttamkumar was married to Sahasrakala He also married Anangasena who loved him very much. With his four wives, he lived on happily. After some time, the king retired to join the holy order and Uttamkumar became the king in succession to him.

Uttamkumar was now anxious to meet with his parents. Together with his four wives and duly accompanied by many other dignitaries of the state, he came to Varanasi. King Makaradhwaja was very happy to see his son after such a long time But the king had grown old and so he expressed a desire that he should retire by handing over the kingdom to such an able son. This he did concentrating henceforth on the affairs of the soul. Uttamkumar was now the king of two states, but he ran the administration with great ability and earned great reputation for his steadfastness in truth, honesty and justice.

Once a Jain monk came to Varanasi. King Uttamkumar came to pay his homage and obeisance to him and was inspired by his words. Now he was sufficiently old to retire, He placed his successor on the throne and himself joined the holy order. Therein he attained great spiritual progress, and after death, he acquired life in heaven.

9. SETH AKALASA

In olden times, there was a big city named Ghogha-patan. The big merchants of that city were famous even in far-off lands. Many merchants from far-off places from across the sea often visited this city on business. Thus business was very prosperous in that city and all people were living a happy life.

Bhupatisingh was the just and most valiant king of that city. He had two queens, each having given birth to a son. The elder son was Mansingh and the younger one was Hamirsingh. One day, Hamirsingh's mother thought that as Mansingh was the elder of the two and was the crown-prince, he would be the successor to the king to the throne, and so she should so contrive that her son might not be in difficulty with his brother in future. When, after this, the king came to her chamber, the queen suggested to him that the responsibility for the running of the administration should be shared by the two brothers. She desired that their amicable relation should last throughout their life. The king appreciated the idea and accepted it.

After the king's death, Mansingh was on the throne. The intimacy between the two brothers was in tact. Mansingh consulted his brother on every administrative problem and Hamirsingh respected his elder brother as he would do his father. Mansingh formulated the policies of the state and their execution was the responsibility of the younger brother. Hamirsingh proved to be very capable in fulfilling his assignments and soon he became popular among the people. He was just, honest and truthful. He was handsome too. So he was a curious combination of grace and virtue. This was the main reason why he attracted anyone who came into contract with him.

The name of Mansingh's wife was Kamalata. She had been brought up in a right environment; but in fact she did not benefit much from it. She was exceedingly passionate

and was a woman with dirty habits. Whenever she saw a young man with physical grace, she became covetous of his company and it was impossible for the man to escape from her clutches.

One evening, when Hamirsingh was out on horseback, Kamalata sitting at her window saw him and she lost herself. She sent her maid to invite him to her chamber. For a moment, Hamirsingh felt a mild hesitation to call on his sister-in-law at this hour of dusk, but he could not disrespect the order from the elder which, he felt, would be like insulting her. So he came. Kamalata desired that he should give his company to her. This made Hamirsingh extremely angry. But he restrained himself somehow and tried to pacify the queen through words of reason. He said,

"You are my sister-in-law and elder to me in status Hence you are like my own mother. How can I submit myself to your desires ? I am sorry and I beg to be excused."

Hamirsingh got up and went out. Kamalata felt disheartened. She decided to insult Hamirsingh and disgrace him too. She ran after him and caught him on the staircase. And then she started shouting,

"Save me. I am being molested."

Many maids at once ran to the rescue of the queen. She was brought back to her chamber. Feeling greatly insulted and harrassed, Hamirsingh came back to his own apartment. Out came from his lips the following words,

"Destiny ! Mysterious is thy way ! "

This unexpected event totally upset Hamir. He was thinking how mean women could be. Just then he received a letter sent by his elder brother, the king, which had the following content,

"Hamir ! You have proved yourself to be a brute. I had a different impression about you, but that is proved false now. I had great respect for you and I had never doubted you even for a moment. But to-day you have darkened all my bright ideas about you. When I got the

report about your behaviour towards the queen, my blood was boiling in anger. The way you have treated your sister-in-law, who deserves to be respected like the mother, would put our family line to great ignominy. I do not think, after this incident, I can live with you even for a moment. Do not show me your blemished face any more. I order that you leave this kingdom and move out of its borders before sun rise. If you dare disobey my orders, I am afraid, the result will be very bitter."

As Hamirsingh was glancing through this note, his eyes became stunned. He had never expected such a thing from his brother. As an elder person, as also the ruler, he should have looked into the matter before passing on this crude judgement. He decided not to protest, but silently to accept the verdict and move out of the kingdom. But before he could do that, he should make suitable arrangement for the management of his property. Indeed there were many people in the city, but it took him a fairly long time to fix up a suitable attorney.

In the same city, there was a merchant named Akalasa. He possessed a small capital of one lakh. Really he was not a business man, but a mere rentier and money-lender. But he was a pious and devoted person and spent much of his time in spiritual activities. He believed in, and practised, the ideal limiting possession and was satisfied with his limited earning. He was never deceitful to any one.

Bhadra was the name of his wife. She was a fine and accomplished woman, pious, honest and devoted like her husband. But she had one flaw. She was given too much to competitive ostentation, and when she saw some neighbouring woman with new clothes or ornaments, she insisted that she too must have similar things. The merchant would tell her not to make a blind imitation of others

One day, Bhadra went to visit a neighbour, Laksmidevi, wife of Seth Hirachand. He ran many shops in the city and in other towns. He had many employees and servants under him. When Bhadra was in conversation with the Seth's wife, she found that all sorts of people were coming to Laksmi to hold consultation and receive orders from her.

Her standard of living appeared to be majestic. Bhadra felt tempted. Then Laksmi started giving an account of her wealth. She said,

"Dear Bhadra ! Just see how our business is progressing. Every year, millions are showered in our shop. Even most learned people are after us for a job. My husband is the most respected person everywhere All this is the marvel of wealth. Your husband does not do business. He always remains at home. So nobody knows him or cares for him. Nor can he increase his wealth in this way. If he starts some business, you will see, both wealth and fame will run after him"

These words of Laksmi pierced Bhadra's heart. She returned home and tried to persuade her husband to engage in some business.

She said,

"Only the good-for-nothing people sit idle at home. Please do start some business like Hirachand. We shall also have enormous wealth If you don't listen to me, I shall some day leave this home."

Akalasa replied,

"My dear ! You are too simple. But is it wise for one to burn his hut at the sight of somebody else's palace ? Business is not possible without resort to falsehood, faithlessness, tricks and immorality. We have enough to meet out needs. We should not involve ourselves in this vicious job. We may not have superfluous wealth, but we are abounding in happiness, peace and fame for honesty and integrity. Peacefully we go to bed every night and we get up peacefully in the morning. Why should we invite fresh trouble by indulging in business activities ? "

But Bhadra was not prepared to listen to this sober advice of her husband. She went on reiterating her demands, and when she found that her husband would not change. she broke down into tears. Akalasa was in a great dilemma, Although he did not want to deviate from the path of

virtue, but ultimately he had to bow down before the wishes of his wife. So he promised that he would start business very soon. At this assurance, Bhadra became happy.

Akalasa went to the market-place and held consultation with the merchants there. At last, his eyes fell on one Nanchand who was seated in a shop surrounded by many people. He was the manager of the shop. Akalasa was impressed by his appearance. He came to him and invited him to his house in the evening. Nanchand accepted the invitation.

In the evening, Nanchand came to Akalasa's house. Akalasa received him with the greatest warmth. They had a very hearty conversation, in the course of which said the Seth,

"Nanchand ! You seem to be very efficient in business, but how is it that you do not appear to do anything of your own ?"

—"Sir ! Business needs capital. I don't have it."

—"I shall give you capital, and you start some business. Let us start a commission shop at the port which we will own in partnership."

Nanchand gladly accepted the proposal. Akalasa, however, imposed a condition that the business should be kept restricted to fifty thousand to start with. Any further expansion of business could be made only by ploughing back profit, and not by making investment from the pocket. In other words, they were to carry on the business within the limit of their capital. Nanchand accepted this as a principle in his business.

The shop named after Akalasa was started at the port. Many big merchants from lands far as well as near came there and established a business link with the new shop. Very soon, the shop earned a great good-will, and made a profit which exceeded a lakh. Nanchand conveyed this happy news to Akalasa and tendered him a complete account of the business. Akalasa only reminded him of the condition he had laid down at the commencement.

Nanchand engaged himself in business heart and soul. The initial success gave him the greatest encouragement. At the end of the second year, he had a profit of five lakhs. This too he reported to his partner-in-business very honestly.

However efficient a man may be, at the wrong turn of his luck, his efficiency even changes into inefficiency. All his estimates and expectations betray him and there is heavy loss where profit was so clearly visible. This happened with Nanchand.

One day, a wandering merchant named Lakha came with a large caravan consisting of hundreds of pack animals to the port of Ghogha. He was to despatch his wares to Java. He came to Seth Hirachand's house where he lodged. He wanted to insure his things against marine risk to the extent of fifteen lakhs. So he sent Hirachand's man to Nanchand's shop in the harbour with a request to underwrite for the same amount. This, he said, would bring the shop a great profit

Nanchand gave thought to the request. He thought of the condition imposed by his partner. But the value of the insurance was much larger than the capital of his business. But the very next moment he thought that his stars were favouring him in anything on which he lay his hands and that in this deal too, the luck would give him full support. So at last he agreed to underwrite.

Man has many expectations, but it is not necessary that all his expectations are fulfilled Nanchand thought that the ships would reach their destination without any difficulty, and this one deal would bring him a profit of three lakhs. When the ships were in mid-ocean, however a violent storm started and most of the ships were in danger in the ocean. Some men of the crew could escape with great difficulty. They came back to Ghogha to report about the great calamity.

When Seth Hirachand came to know of the disaster, he hastened to Nanchand to get the compensation. When Nanchand heard of it, the earth slipped from under his legs. He had taken such an enormous risk without consulting with his partner and the risk had materialised bringing such a

huge loss on his shoulder. But what could he do now ? He came to Seth Akalasa and apprised him of the great loss that the business has suffered from this single deal. Akalasa too was stunned to hear this. How could he meet a loss of fifteen lakhs ? Said he to Nanchand.

"You have done a very wrong thing in transgressing the limit I had fixed and this you have done without taking me into confidence. But now we must honour the commitment. You go to Seth Hirachand at once and tell him that the compensation will reach him to-morrow in the morning."

When Akalsa said like that, he himself did not know wherefrom he would get such a huge amount Whenever he remembered of it, he saw a nightmare. He felt that he was wrong in taking to business at the insistence of his wife. For a credit-worthy man, it was a very bad thing to fail to honour his commitment. Akalasa was pious, conscientious and brave, but now he saw no other alternative but to end his own life. He came out of his house, went to the market and purchased some opium. With this, he came back to his home. Bhadra knew nothing of it. He came to his room, but as he was about to swallow this poisonous drug, Bhadra entered his room. She caught his hand and said,

"What is this you are doing ?"

Akalasa told her the entire story, concluding,

"Such is the outcome of your insistence. How can I meet such a heavy loss out of a small capital ? I cannot live after my credit is gone. So I must end my life. What remains will be enough to support you and the child."

Bhadra had tears in her eyes when she heard all this. She said,

"You end your life in this manner, and I continue to to live after that—I cannot even think of it ! If you must end your life, let me sip the poison first and end mine. The child will be supported by his own luck."

It was a very tense situation. The *seth* and his wife were on the point of exit from this world. In such a situa-

tion, the words of wisdom dropped from the lips of the wife. Said she,

"My dear ! Did we do as many good deeds in our life as we should have done as human beings. Perhaps we didn't. We did not practise all the rituals, penances, reading the sacred texts, meditation, *kayotsarga*, etc , in particular. You are more pious than me, more learned, more wise. I have a very humble request If we end our life like this, without fulfilling our spiritual obligation, what will be the outcome for us ? Any spiritual practice performed with sincerity never goes in vain I am sure, such a thing will help us to overcome this great difficulty."

Akalasa readily agreed. He thanked his wife for showing the right path. He threw aside the cup of poison and fixed himself in the *kayotsarga* posture.

The next morning, Hamirsingh was to leave the kingdom. He was all these days looking for an attorney who would take charge of his property. He acquainted himself with the standing and creditworthiness of various people living in the city, and at last he decided to have Akalasa to be his attorney to look after his earthly possessions during his exile. He felt that Akalasa was the right man to do the job. With this thought in his mind, he came to Akalasa's house and explained to him the situation he was in. The *seth* expressed his sympathy for him and said,

"Sir ! What can I do for you ? "

—"So long as I am outside the country, you will be my attorney to look after my property, movable and immovable. I hope, I am placing my property in right hands and it will be duly taken care of by you."

In a very calm voice, Akalasa said,

"Sir ! Never trust a merchant. When there is loss in business, he gets tempted at other people's wealth. So please do not involve me in the safecustody of your wealth."

—"Seth ! I am not going to be guided by you on this point. After much consideration, I have selected you for my purpose. You may use my wealth for any purpose you

deem fit and necessary. When I shall come back, you give me whatever portion of it still remains with you, and whatever portion of it you intend to return. If perchance the whole is wasted, you give me nothing. So you see, my conditions are perfectly flexible and you are under no hard obligation in any way. I have no time. You take charge of it immediately. I have thereafter to prepare for a very long and uncertain journey. If I fail to go out before day-break, my life will be in danger."

Akalasa had nothing more to say by way of refusal. Only these words came out from his mouth,

"If you have so much faith in me, I am at your service. But, sir, when you are fixed up, please send me your address, and if there is any change in it, please keep me informed about it. As for myself, I shall try to keep in touch with the king and place the real facts before him at the opportune moment. When I find a change in his mood towards you, I shall immediately inform you about that."

This was all that Hamirsingh expected from the merchant. Perhaps he got more than his expectation, and he felt himself happy and relieved. He returned to his apartment and took no time to move out on a very long and uncertain trek to where the destiny would carry him. Before day break, he was not only outside the city, but had crossed the boundary of the kingdom.

The impact of religion is very great. Spiritual progress strengthens man's material realisations. Akalasa was now freed from worry. In the morning, purses containing fifteen lakhs reached the house of Seth Hirachand. He had now no doubt that Akalasa was a man of great means. Just then the news came that the ships bound for Java fell into difficulty on the ocean, but had at last safely reached Java, and there was no much damage to the ship or loss of cargo, This pleased Seth Hirachand, and he sent back the purses containing fifteen lakhs to Seth Akalasa.

It was in this way that Hamirsingh's wealth had saved Akalasa's credit at a very crucial moment. Henceforth he

was very much alert about the trust and he often came to the court, which gave him a chance to establish contact with the king. Soon there developed an intimacy between the king and the *seth*.

Sin does not remain concealed for long. One day, as Kamalata was enjoying the company of some stranger, the king entered into her room. Thus she was caught in the midst of adultery. When the king saw it with his own eyes, his eyes opened about the real state of things with his brother. He had now no doubt that Hamirsingh was innocent and he himself had been unduly harsh and cruel towards him. This filled his mind with great repentance and he was anxious to recall him home But he knew nothing about his whereabouts so that he could not write to him even though he wanted to. One day, he mentioned about it to Akalasa At the king's pressing request, Akalasa sent information to Hamirsingh to come back.

The king now found no charm in the worldly life. His own treatment of his innocent brother made him extremely penitent. The behaviour of his seniormost queen embittered him towards domestic life. He gave his throne to his younger brother and entered into the holy order It was now Hamirsingh who changed his own sister-in-law and brought her back to the path of honesty and virtue. Kamalata was now a wholly changed person. She fixed herself firmly in religion, and later she too joined the order of nuns. She made great progress in this life, and after death, she was born in heaven.

10. BHADRASINGH

In Saurastra, there was a city named Kalyanpur. Bhadrasingh was the king, Sundari was his queen and Kuldip-singh was their son. The king was a great devotee of truth. In his whole life, he had never made a false utterance. He had to face many complicated situations in life, had to pass through many difficulties, but he always remained firm in truth. The king's behaviour greatly influenced the queen and the prince. This small family of three shared together material welfare as well as spiritual wealth.

One day, Indra was discussing spiritual matters in his great assembly and the discussion centred on the lives of pious men. Said he addressing the gods,

"Among all the vows, the practice of truth is comparatively more difficult In many a difficult situation, the fulfilment of this vow is the real ordeal and test of the soul's steadfastness. In the world of men, there are very few who are devoted to truth."

Said one of the gods,

"It seems to me that there is not a single soul on earth who is really devoted to truth. Perhaps the earthly beings have been created on the pedestal of falsehood."

Indra sharply disagreed. Said he,

"This is not a correct statement. Falsehood is comparatively more in the world of men, but truth has not become wholly extinct. King Bhadrasingh is a shining example of this. There is no power on earth which can make him deviate from the path of truth."

One of the gods wanted to test and he sought Indra's permission to do so. He had a feeling that human resolve, howsoever firm, must bend before the power of the god.

Being permitted by Indra, the god came down to the world of men. He created a large army and laid seize of Bhadrasingh's kingdom. There was a severe battle between the two armies. Bhadrasingh's men fought with the greatest bravery, but they could be no match to an army created by the power of a god. Bhadrasingh was defeated, and the kingdom, the palace and the throne were now occupied by the victor. The king, the queen and the prince went out to the forest.

When the adversary is more powerful, one does not get peace. Wherever he goes, the adversary is behind him, further and further on. The three continued their journey through wild forests, hurt by pebbles and thorns. They were now exhausted and sweating like anything. They had hunger and thirst, but had no means to satisfy them. In this sort of situation, the prince was now wholly unable to move further. So they sat down beneath a tree A traveller offered them a piece of meat, which the king declined saying,

"We may die of hunger, but meat is a prohibited food for us."

The traveller was insistent. So the three left the place.

Suffering is the real test of life. And suffering has a fairly long course. Once it starts, it does not end soon. In many cases, it comes in more and more intensified form so that an ordinary person breaks down, or deviates from the goal. King Bhadrasingh's life was on trial. They walked to some distance and sat down again. The king was looking/blankly at/the future. Suddenly, a cobra came out and bit the prince. The prince fell on the ground in a moment. The patience of the king and the queen was disturbed at this unexpected turn of event. They could no more bear it. The loss of kingdom was nothing compared to the loss of the son. The queen placed the boy on her lap and washed the wound with her tears. The tears in the king's eyes were, however, wholly dried up at this great loss. He could not relieve himself by shedding them.

When pain is excessive and one has no one beside him with whom he can share it, he can no longer remain steady.

Said the quack, "you take this bow and arrow......"

The king and the queen lost their their conciousness and fell on the ground. The same god appeared there as a medicine man. He applied air and water, and the king and the queen regained sense and sat up Said the quack,

"You people look to be very much lucky. Just see I have arrived here in time to help you. If you do one thing, I think, the prince may be restored to life."

"What's that ? " asked the royal couple in great curiosity. Said the quack to the king,

"You take this bow and arrow in your hand. Look ahead, and on the tree, you will see a bird of the colour of berry. You shoot the arrow at the bird so that it drops down. Then you apply its meat at the wound. It will be healed in a few minutes. I have myself tried it in many cases, without failure even in one case."

The king declined. Said he,

"Sir ! This is a remedy beyond my capacity to use. I do not want to save my son by killing another's son. For me, life is life and I make no discrimination between the bird and the prince. Killing a living being, howsoever small it may be, is a sin, and I am afraid, I cannot indulge in it."

The quack argued with the king and the queen and did his best to turn them to his way of thinking, but he failed. Now, the parents were thinking of performing the last rites of the dead prince, but they could not find sufficient wood in the forest, thanks to the stratagem of the god. So they had no other alternative but to discard the dead body in the forest and move ahead.

After the parents had left, the god came to the prince and restored him to life. The prince looked around, but his parents were not there. So he started crying. He was wandering where his parents had gone and why they had gone by leaving him alone in that dense forest. He thought they would come back. But for a long time there was no trace of them. Now, he was really alarmed. So he got up and moved out in search of his parents.

The luck of the boy took a favourable turn and brought him to a city of which the king was Sumanasena. As the

boy was passing by the palace, the king saw the boy. He was impressed by his princely look and he sent his men to bring the boy to him. The king gave him shelter at the palace.

King Bhadrasingh and his queen were spending their days in the greatest distress. Sometimes they were living in the countryside and sometimes in the forests, but their firmness in spirituality did not wane. Both of them had the same thinking which was to remain firm on their chosen path.

At last the king and the queen reached the city where their son was living. They thought that the city was fairly big and that they would get their subsistence quite easily.

The king left the queen outside the city and himself moved in with a view to sell his ring. This was a ring which both the king and the queen valued most. But in their present distress, they had no other alternative but to part with this.

The king reached a jeweller's shop which was near the palace. He offered the ring for sale As the king was talking with the jeweller, the first queen of Sumanasena saw him from her own window and sent for him. The king forgot to take the ring from the jeweller.

The queen had a different sort of business with him, which was none too dignified. This was a fresh temptation for him but he remained firm. The queen tried her best to induce him. She unfolded all her coquetry, but to no effect. Then she said,

"Either you agree to my request, or, you will be in great difficulty. I shall not spare you in any case."

Bhadrasingh stood up at once and ran out. But the queen had meanwhile started shouting and this attracted the guards. The guards arrested him at once and presented him before the king. The charge was serious—intention to molest the queen, for which he was given a capital punishment. Bhadrasingh was then taken away to the execution ground and preparations were ready to hang him.

When Queen Sundari, Bhadrasingh's wife found after a long waiting that her husband did not return, she started in

search of him. As she was new to the city, she was wandering aimlessly when she came across the body of a young boy. Out of compassion for him, the queen placed him on her lap. She felt the boy was perhaps not yet dead. But really the boy was dead and the queen was mistaken. Just then some of the king's guards came that way. She saw a woman with the dead body of a child with her. They took it to be a case of infanticide or some such thing, and on a charge of killing the child, they arrested her and brought her before the king. The king pronounced a capital punishment for her too, and she was taken to the execution ground, where her husband was also awaiting his own execution. The coincidence and meeting were thus very striking

Said Bhadrasingh to his wife,

"Now the time for our liberation is drawing near. It will be a chance to end this miserable life and start afresh. Have patience. Be firm in spirituality. Remember the truth. Give up the meditation of the miserable and be steady. This is no punishment, but the termination of a miserable life."

Bhadrasingh had passed through many difficult experiences in life. He was now almost at the last threshold of it. But one more test, the final one, so to say, still waited for him. As the couple stood ready for being hanged, the same god came there as a brahmin. The brahmin expressed great sympathy for the couple and said,

"Sir ! You appear to be a man of great fortune from whom the world is to derive much benefit. I wonder, how you are here with the executioner's rope round your neck ? "

In a very calm voice, the king said,

"We are ksatriyas but convicts. We cannot deny this at this supreme moment of death.

The brahmin said,

"Our king who is a ksatriya has a very great regard for all ksatriyas. He believes that a ksatriya can commit no crime and he is above capital punishment. So my suggestion is that if you take meat only once, he will be convinced that you are a ksatriya, and then he will spare your life. That will save your life. That will be an easy way out for you

to save your valuable life. If, however, that is not acceptable to you, then, as an alternative, I suggest that you play with the king at dice, and with all my brahminical power, I promise to help you so that you will win for yourself all his wealth and power. Thus you may be relieved of the present ordeal and enjoy a kingdom. If none of these proposals be acceptable to you, then, I have a third one too, which is that I myself and my own wife are prepared to sacrifice our own life in order to save you both. We will confess and take on ourselves the crime for which you have been charged. We are after all poor people, always in distress and misery. Our exit from the world would make no difference. But if you live, you will be able to do great things in this world. I hope, you will agree to this at least and will not bother much about our life."

The king and the queen thanked the brahmin for his proposals to save their life, but they regretted inability to accept any one of them. Said they,

"Sir! We believe in non-violence, and to us all life has the same value. Our heart does not approve that we save our own life by sacrificing your life. Life is after all short and it must end some day To save this, we won't agree to eat meat or play at dice either Nor do we agree to your readiness to confess the crime which will be indulging in falsehood. After all, this body will go some day and it is good that the chance for it has arrived to us. Let us go out when we are firm in our faith and have not allowed ourselves to bend or to submit."

All the efforts of the god thus ended in failure. He could not make Bhadrasingh to deviate from truth and virtue. As now the king and the queen were hanged, the whole situation changed in a twinkling of the eye. The execution, the scaffold, the rope—all disappeared and King Bhadrasingh was seated on his throne in his own kingdom, with the queen at his side. Prince Kuldipsingh stood with his folded hands. The king and the queen did not know if the whole thing was a dream or a reality. Now, the god appeared before the king in his own form and begged to be excused for the test he

took of him and for all the trouble he caused to him. Then he showered praise on the king and departed for his abode in heaven.

The king and the queen were now old and they thought of relinquishing the responsibility of office. They placed the prince on the throne and joined the holy order. Kuldipsingh too proved to be a great king. He led a very honest life and ran a clean and just administration. In his old age, he too joined the holy order and attained great spiritual progress.

11. BANKACHULA

In a certain part of India, there reigned a king named Vimala. He had two children by Queen Sumangala, one a boy and the other a girl They were named respectively Puspachula and Puspachulaa. When the two had grown up, they were duly married But unfortunately, Puspachulaa lost her husband within a few years of her marriage. Then at the pressing request of her brother, she came to live with him. Her brother's wife was also very fond of her. Thus she spent her days at a reasonable ease and comfort.

Puspachula was a prince, but he was not a good man. All his activities were devoted to things that were harmful to others. For playing mischief, he maintained a large band of rogues, and people were very much afraid of them. Yet, none dared to complain, since the prince himself was their patron. On account of his anti-people activities, the prince was nick-named Bankachula. Even the sister became involved in the brother's vices and she too acquired the nick-name of Bankachulaa.

The prince was virtually without a check and his wicked-ness was increasing with the passage of time. At last, people became desperate and collectively lodged a complain with the king The king was also not very happy about his son, but when the people reported against him, he was not only pained but also ashamed. By the order of the king, the prince was banished. His wife and sister accompanied him.

In wandering from place to place, the party reached a village of tribal people who were notorious criminals. When these men came to know that the stranger was a prince who had been banished for his anti-people activities, they hailed him and accepted him as their leader. The prince, too, liked this new life and was well-settled there.

The rainy season was drawing near and Acarya Chandra-

yasa was moving with his monks in the company of a certain merchant. But, by chance, the monks were separated from their host, and it was not possible for them to reach their destination before the rains started. So they sought shelter in Bankachula's village Bankachula welcomed the monks but said,

"Monks ! As for shelter, there is no dearth of it in this village, and you may live wherever you like, but on one condition, viz, that you do not utter any holy word here. The ways you ask people to discard are the means of our livelihood. We do not want that you take shelter with us and yet deprive us of our means of livelihood"

The Acarya agreed. The monks lived on but they never violated the condition. They did not open their lips to talk or to take any food. When the rainy season was over, the monks were preparing to depart. The Acarya sought Bankachula's permission. Bankachula who was deeply impressed by their firmness very reluctantly gave it He himself accompanied the group till the border of his village. Then he bowed before the Acarya and the monks imploring,

"Come again."

The Acarya said the following words at the time of departure :

"Bankachula ! We thank you for the shelter you gave us, and happily did we spend the rainy season in your village. As per your condition, we never opened our lips during these four months But it is now time for us to depart and I would like to address a few words to you. If you like them, then, try to understand them."

"You are welcome, sir, but I hope, you will restrict yourself to items that may be possible for me or within my capacity."

"Bankachula ! I advise you to desist from four things, which are

(1) do not eat a fruit you do not know ;

(2) do not strike at any one without moving back seven or eight steps ;

(3) look on the first queen as your own mother ; and

(4) never take a crow's meat.

"If you follow these four rules which I prescribe, then you will have only prosperity throughout your life."

Bankachula agreed and saw the monks off.

It was summer Bankachula started with his men to loot a certain village. The villagers got the information in time and left the village with all their belongings. When the robbers came, they found only empty houses So in great disappointment, they left But they were hungry and thirsty because of the day's hard labour They took shelter under a tree. Some men went out in search of some fruits and luckily they got them on a tree. The fruits were ripe and juicy and had a very attractive flavour. They brought them and spread them before their chief Bankachula enquired what the fruits were, but none among his men knew its name. Then said Bankachula,

"Well, I am bound by a vow not to take an unknown fruit. So I cannot take these."

"But, sir, we are in a very difficult situation here and we should not attach much importance to vows. We are utterly famished and we must save our life. If we live, we will have ample time in future to observe our vows."

But Bankachula did not yield. Said he,

"To my mind, it's not enough that we honour our vows only under favourable conditions. They are to be observed under all conditions, howsoever adverse. That's the real test. Let my life be in danger, but till I know their name, I cannot take them, whatever the consequence "

Bankachula remained firm in the observation of his vow. He did not touch the fruits. All his men except one ate to their heart's content and lay down to take rest. After some time, Bankachula asked them to get up, but not a single person stirred. When he bent to give one a severe jerk, he found that all of them except one were dead. Bankachula found that his vow had saved his life.

Said he to himself,

"The far-sighted monk has saved my life"

Full of grief at the death of his trusted men, he returned home. It was the dead of night. Before knocking at the door, he peeped through the door and in the dim light of the lamp, he saw that a man was sharing the same bed with his wife. His blood boiled within him and he pulled out his sword to strike But at once he remembered the second vow and moved a few steps back. This caused a loud din and the man in the bed jumped up. It was none other than his own sister in the male attire. She advanced to receive her brother Throwing light on her attire, she said,

"My brother ! There's an interesting story behind it. This evening, men from your enemy camp came to this village disguised as operamen to ascertain you plans I thought that if these men would come to know of your absence during the night, they might cause us trouble So I dressed myself in your attire in order to look like you As a matter of precaution during the night, I did not change my dress."

Bankachula saw the benefit he had derived from the second vow and that too so soon But for this, he would have killed his own sister, to repent for the rest of his life.

Once Bankachula went to Ujjain to steal in that city. He was about to break into the house of a rich man when he heard that some people were quarrelling inside. From what he heard, he realised that a father and a son were quarrelling over a penny. He thought,

"What do I get in such a miserly home ?"

Then he turned his steps towards the colony of the brahmins But soon he thought,

"The brahmins are beggars by habit and profession. How much shall I get in their house ?"

So he turned towards the red light district. But again he had a prick of conscience,

"These harlots do not spare even a leper. I mustn't touch their money "

Just then he had come near the palace. Said he to himself,

"This is the right place to steal. If I am successful, I shall be rich overnight; and if I am caught, still people will know my name. So there's gain eitherway."

He scaled the wall and dropped inside. He was now inside the palace. Man expects something, but Destiny has something else in store for him. As Bankachula stepped inside the palace, whom did he meet but the first queen herself. The queen was charmed at his physical grace Almost welcoming him, she said,

"Well, who are you? Wherefrom do you come? What's the purpose of your coming at this hour? But don't be scared? Speak out whatever you have in your mind. Here we are alone, and you are in a safe company."

Bankachula's voice almost failed him. He was severely shaking With difficulty, he said,

" Mother! I am a thief and I have come to steal."

"Well! There's plenty of wealth here. You may pick up anything you like to. But don't be in a hurry to go out. You should know that I am the first queen. I am attracted by your physical grace and manliness. I invite you and welcome you to my chamber. Let us enjoy each other's company. Take it from me that this evening, I declined the company of the king himself. But I am covetous of your company. Remember that if I am pleased with you, you will have plenty of wealth and plenty of happiness; but if I am displeased, then you will not only be under arrest, but will also be deprived of your life. Now, you make your choice as you please."

Bankachula thought of his third vow and said,

"Mother! You are the first queen, and so you are venerable to me I live in the forest. I am a thief by profession. It does not befit your dignity to be attracted towards me."

The queen interrupted,

"Fool! Why do you address me as 'mother'? Don't

repeat the word. Remember that if you do not oblige me, you will have no standing room anywhere on this earth."

But Bankachula remained firm. Said he,

"Madam ! I cannot be a party to such an ignoble proposal even if I am to court death on account of non-compliance."

The queen burst out in rage. She pierced her skin with her own hands, tore her clothes and shouted for help. The sentries came at once to the spot. Bankachula was caught. The king had witnessed the whole scene through a hole in the wall. He now appeared on the scene. He signalled the guards not to be too harsh with the man and to present him for trial at the first hour after daybreak.

The king felt very small at the behaviour of the queen. He passed the night in extreme restlessness. In the morning, he came to the court and Bankachula was presented before him. The king asked him to tender his account which he did without hiding anything. Said the king,

"Man ! I am pleased with your honesty. It's no easy job to reach the queen's apartment, but you went there. I gladly bestow the queen on you."

"But, sir, these are impious words. The queen I have addressed as 'mother'."

Then giving a turn to the conversation, the king said,

"Then, on account of your misbehaviour towards the queen, you will be punished."

"Sir ! I am prepared to submit to any ordeal, but I cannot carry the queen with me."

The king was extremely pleased with Bankachula. He declared him to be innocent and gave a capital punishment to the queen. At this Bankachula fell at the king's feet.

"Sir ! I cannot stand the punishment of my mother. Please spare her."

The king spared the queen's life but he divorced her. At the request of the king, Bankachula stayed at the palace. His wife and sister joined there with him.

He was now remembering the Acarya again and again. He was a completely changed man and was keenly waiting for the day when he would meet the great monk again. At last, his ardent desire was fulfilled and the great monk arrived in the city one day. Bankachula waited on him in a manner befitting his present position. When he met the great monk, he courted the vows of a devoted follower from him. It was on this occasion that he became acquainted with a merchant named Jinadas who had come from a town named Saligram which was located near Ujjain. Jinadas was a devoted follower. Both Bankachula and Jinadas became great friends.

Bankachula's three vows had already been tested, but now there remained the fourth one. Once the king assigned an expedition to Bankachula against the powerful king of Kamrup Bankachula was a veteran in the art of fighting. But the task was immensely difficult. However, the expedition went in his favour, though at a tremendous cost. He received severe injuries all over the body. Bankachula came back to Ujjain. The best physicians were appointed by the king to attend him, but they could hardly give him any relief. One day, the king asked,

"Are the wounds too severe to be filled up ? "

The physicians thought for a while and said,

"Sir ! All our medicines have proved futile. Now remains the last one."

"What's that ?" asked an anxious king.

"It's the meat of a crow."

Bankachula heard it and at once reacted,

"This is not acceptable to me. I am bound by a vow not to take it."

The king—"My dear friend ! Vow is not more important than your life. You have to take it."

Bankachula—"But, sir, I cannot agree. I have given up all kinds of meat, what to speak of the meat of the crow."

The king—"Bankachula ! All the vows are meant for

a living person; not for one who is in the jaws of death. So do not worry about it."

Bankachula—"Sir ! I do not care for my life. One day, I must die. Why then do I deviate from my path ? I am not prepared to face the outcome consequent upon the breaking of the vow."

When all the arguments and inducements by the king had failed, he sent for Bankachula's friend Jinadas. On his way to Ujjain, Jinadas came across two nymphs who were weeping. He asked them about the cause of their trouble. Said the nymphs,

"We are the denigens of Saudharma-kalpa Our lord has gone out from there on completion of his life-span, and we are unable to live alone So we have come to invite Bankachula if he agrees to live with us But, sir, our plans will fail through if you are successful in inducing your friend to take the crow's meat. It is for this that we weep."

Jinadas consoled the goddesses and assured them that he would try to help them, so far as he could.

Jinadas met his friend Bankachula and advised the king as follows :

"Sir ! The only cure for him now is to remain firm on his path. We should stop applying all cures so that he may spend the remaining portion of his life in quiet and peace."

Bankachula now made a final request to his friend,

"If you have got any affection for me, then, administer prescriptions to me that may help me in my final moments. I need not anything else."

Jinadas helped him in his last moments and did what was expected of a true friend. Bankachula was thus rid of all attachments. Then he undertook a fast upto death, adored the four 'refuges', remembered the five 'great souls', decried his past evils, forgave all living beings and begged to be forgiven by them. Thus he attained a celestial abode in very high

On his way back, Jinadas came across the same nymphs who were still weeping. Said he,

"Why are you weeping even now. I did as you had desired and Bankachula did not deviate from his path. Has he not agreed to husband you ?"

Casting a deep sigh, the nymphs said,

"Sir ! Your coming, instead of helping us, has done us a great harm. You made his final moments extremely pious because of which he has attained a celestial region, which is very much beyond our access."

Jinadas could no longer stand there. He had the satisfaction that he had been able to help his friend adequately. In the ecstacy at the success of his mission and in deep gratitude to the path, he came back to his own city.

12. AMBIKA

Tirthankar Arhat Aristanemi attained supreme knowledge on the top of Mount Ujjayanta. The great occasion was celebrated by men as well as gods. A congregation was held and the Arhat gave his sermon.

In the assembly, Sakrendra, the Indra of the gods, looked around. His eyes fell on a goddess who had been a new arrival in heaven. With the Tirthankara, he raised a question about her previous life. Ordained the Arhat,

"Sakrendra ! The event is quite recent. To the south of this Ujjayanta mountain, there's a city named Kuvera (Kodinagar). The king of that city was named Somabhatta. He was a remarkable combination of piety and justice. His wife's name was Ambika. She was a highly accomplished lady, being a support and strength to her husband. They had two sons—Ambar and Sambar.

"Somabhatta's own father was a devout Jaina and this had its impact on the family. But after his death, the Jaina influence started waning, because his wife, the queen-mother, was a Saivait, and she discouraged the Jaina practices at the palace.

"One day, two *sramana* monks came to the palace. They had just completed severe penances and came to beg to break their fast. The queen-mother was not there at that time. Ambika bowed before them, welcomed them and humbly begged them to accept food. The monks accepted food and left.

"A dissident never fails to turn a pious deed into a vile one by his behaviour. One of the palace-women who was patronised by the queen-mother saw Ambika offering food to the monks and made a long harangue.

" 'What have you done ? What were you after with these tonsured men ? This is inconsistent with the dignity and honour

Piercing through the silence of the forest, Ambika proceeded.

of a queen. Well, I know, you will say, you gave them food. But was that even worthwhile when you had not yet worshipped the gods and made offerings to the departed forefathers ? And this you have done when your mother-in-law is not present'."

"The lady was not yet prepared to hold her tongue. Ambika listened with her lips sealed. Just then the queen-mother returned. The matter reached her ears and she started now her part of the vilification. Ambika was at a loss to understand what wrong she had done. But she said nothing in protest. Silence proved more provocative than an actual exchange of words and the queen-mother's tongue moved like a horse broken from its moovings :

'Ye harlot ! Ye dared to do such a vile thing when I am still alive. During my absence, you courted the company of two beggars and I know not what you may do in future. The dignity of this royal house is in danger so long as ye are here'.

"Ambika was a noble lady with few words, but there is a limit to toleration. Her heart was pierced, but she felt herself helpless. The matter was reported to the king in a very distorted form, and shouted he in rage. 'Wherefrom has this vile woman come to this palace ? I do not want to see her here even for a moment.'

"Ambika shivered at this turn of events. She had never thought that it would come to this. She pitied her own self. After so much insult she had borne, life had no more charm for her. She hardened herself, took her young sons with her and left the palace. All the while, she asked herself, but found no answer, 'What wrong did I do in giving food to the monks ? Is it so vile ?'

"But at last, she consoled herself and thought, 'I should blame none. They are the outcome of my own impious *karma*. Now I should concentrate on improving my future.' So she gathered courage and turned herself inward. 'Henceforth I take shelter with Arhat Aristanemi who is fixed in meditation on Mount Raivata.'

"Piercing through the silence of the forest, Ambika proceeded steadily with her two sons. The way was bad and oppressive, and they were tired. The boys who were not accustomed to see a forest were alarmed Already a quarter of the night had passed, and all were hungry and thirsty. They could move no more.

"What could Ambica do ? She was no longer a queen living in the palace. She looked all around but she saw nothing which they could eat or drink. She roamed like this for some time and then sat down beneath a tree.

"But she could not rest when the boys were oppressed by hunger and thirst She was looking on and on. Suddenly she saw a place where the trees were very thick. She felt that near the thick vegetation, there might be a tank. Her guess was not wrong. There was a tank and mango trees on its bank with ripe fruits on Their immediate needs were thus fulfilled.

"At the palace, the queen-mother felt elated at her immediate victory. She had been able to abuse the monks and throw out her daughter-in-law. Thus happy, she returned to her room. To her great surprise, she saw piles of gold and gems there. She came to the kitchen, and there too the same. She was wondering wherefrom all these had come, when she heard a voice from above, saying, 'This is the outcome of making an offer to the monks. Ambika is worthy of worship even by the gods.'

"This alarmed the old lady. She felt that Ambika did nothing which might be called into question. She felt somewhat penitent and asked her son to look for, and bring back, the daughter-in-law and the two children.

"Somabhatta moved out in a great hurry in search of his wife. Following her footsteps, he proceeded in the right direction. At last, he could see them from a great distance and shouted. 'My dear ! Wait. Wait for me '

"Ambika turned and saw her husband. She thought that he had come to kill her at the instigation of his mother.

Where should she go ? With whom should she seek shelter? She did not like to die in this ghastly manner. She preferred to put an end to her life herself. She saw a well nearby. She picked up her little ones and movėd hurriedly to it. Then she addressed these final words :

" Oh Arhats ! Liberated Souls ! Monks ! I take shelter with thee. I have no intention to commit suicide, but circumstances compel me to do so. I have been supported by spirituality so far, and I pray, may I be supported likewise in my next life ! If I have earned any merit in th is life, may I not be born in a non-Aryan race or in a non-Aryan country ! May I always get shelter with the Liberated Souls, Preceptor and Religion ! I seek shelter with Arhat Aristanemi who is soon to reorganise the Order. I could not live to see the day myself and pay my homage and obeisance to him. May my desire to worship him be fulfilled in my next life !

"Before Somabhatta could reach the well, she leapt into it with her two little children. Somabhatta saw this from a little distance and heard her last words. He was alarmed and his eyes were filled with tears. He could no longer stand this tragic scene and fell down in a swoon. When he regained consciousness, the following words slipped from his mouth, 'You were pure, and you were abused for nothing. How shall I be liberated from this colossal sin ?'

"With great effort, he came to the well. He stood on it and said, 'My dear ! Useless is this life of mine when you are no longer in it' So saying, he leapt into the well to join his wife through death.

"Sakrendra !"

Concluded Arhat Aristanemi,

"This Ambika is now born in heaven. She came here to pay her homage and obeisance. She is now a commanding deity. Her husband has been born as her vehicle in the form of a tiger."

GLOSSARY

Arts, 72 and 64—Arts have been identified as 64 in some cases and 72 in others, which are to be acquired by a person to obtain full accomplishment.

Avadhi knowledge—Extra-sensory knowledge without the use of sense organs. This comes at a certain stage of spiritual advancement.

Bharanda—A giant bird of which there is mention in many Jaina stories. It has two mouths and one belly. Traders used to go to the Valley of Diamonds with their help. These birds have been praised in the Jaina literature for their extreme steadfastness

Bhila—A man belonging to the aboriginal tribe. Men of this tribe usually live on hunting.

Chakravartin—World-monarch, emperor

Garuda—A bird supposed to be the vehicle of Vishnu, the Protector-god in the Hindu pantheon.

Karambas—A sweetmeat which may be conveniently taken during a journey.

Karandaka—A fruit.

Karma—It is the substantive force, matter in very subtle form. Matter-atoms called *pudgala* fill up all cosmic space. The soul, by its communication with the outer world, becomes literally penetrated with by these matter-atoms. These in their turn become *karma* and build up a body round the soul called *karman sarira* which does not drop out even when the soul moves out from one existence and goes to another. *Karma* works in such a subtle way that every action leaves a mark of its own which is retained and built in into the organism to determine and guide the future course of the soul. *Karman sarira* drops out only at liberation.

Kayotsarga—A posture of meditation in which a monk loses even his body sense. It is popular with the Jaina monks.

Kinnara—A species of Vyantara god. They are, with *yaksas, bhutas, pisachas*, etc., of an inferior quality.

Ksatriya—In the Indian social system of the past, the *ksatriyas* or warriors occupied the second position next to the *brahmanas* or priests. This caste is now extinct. The Rajputs claim to be the successors of the *ksatriyas*, which may or may not be accepted.

Nagar-seth—Town-merchant. It is an honorific title conferred on the wealthiest merchant of the city.

Namokara—This is the core *mantra* (inspiring words) of the Jainas which is often counted on the beads. Translated into English, it is only a form of obeisance to the five 'agents of well-being', called *pancha paramesthin*. They are, the victor-Jinas, the perfected souls, the head of the order, the spiritul preceptor and the monks at large in the universe.

Nirgrantha—Literally meaning one who is freed of all worldly ties, the word has come to be synonymous with a *sramana* or Jaina monk

Seth—A wealthy merchant.

Srifala—A fruit, also called *bael*.

Tapasa—Used singly or collectively, it means a heretical monk or an order of heretical monks respectively.

Yojana—About 8 English miles. Two miles make one *krosa* and four *krosas* make one *yojana* respectively.

Yogi, yogini—*Yoga* is the Hindu system of philosophic meditation and asceticism designed to bring about the reunion of the devotee's soul with the supreme reality, viz, God. Hence the words mean a devotee of *yoga*, male as well as female. Broadly they are a class of heretical monks who indulge in all sorts of practices considered offensive and objectionable by the orthodox Jainas.

SOURCES

Surasundari, Mrigankalekha and Bhadrasingh—These are popular stories current in the Jaina tradition. Their sources are not definitely known.

Mrigasundari—In V. S. 1667, Kanak Kusal Gani wrote this story. A second manuscript on the same is available, but the name of the writer is not known. There are several versions of the same story in Gujarati.

Nala-Damayanti—The story of King Nala and Queen Damayanti is well-known in the Indian mythology and is a part of the great epic, the *Mahabharata* Its Jaina version is available in *Vasudeva Hindi, Tri-sasti-salaka-purusa Charitra, Pandava Charitra, Neminatha Charitra, Kumarapala Pratibodha, Silopadesamala Vritti, Karpura-prakara Tika, Amamasvami Charitra, Bharatesvara Bahuvali Vritti* and many others.

Anjana—Almost equally well-known in the Indian mythology is the story of pious Anjana, wife of Pavananjaya and the celebrated mother of Hanumana of the *Ramayana* fame. The Jaina version is contained in *Pauma Cariyu* by Vimal Suri, *Padma Purana* by Ravisena and *Pauma Cariyu* by Svayambhu. The story has been very lucidly retold by Acarya Hemachandra in *Tri-sasti-salaka-purusa Charitra*. In the 14th-15th century V S, poet Hastimalla produced a piece of drama based on the same theme. Poems on it have been composed in Prakrit by Gunasamriddhi Mahattara, in Sanskrit by Punya Sagar Gani, and also by Upadhyaya Merusundara and Brahma Jinadasa.

Narmada Sundari—The story was produced in Prakrit by Devachandra Suri and Mahendra Suri, in Apavramsa by Jinaprabha Suri and in Gujarati by Merusundara. It has also found a place in *Vasudeva Hindi*. The story has been produced in 205 beautiful *slokas* in a work entitles *Dharma-katha* written in V. S. 1339. In Sanskrit prose literature, the story has heen included in *Kama-kumbhadi Katha Samgraha*.

Madan & Dhanadeva—The story has been taken from a popular poetical work *(rasakatha)* which has 459 couplets. Its author is one Padmavijaya and the date and place of composition respectively are 1857 V. S. and Rajnagar (Ahmedabad). A copy of this work in *mss* form is preserved in the collection of Srimali Jain Upasraya at Jamnagar. On the initiative of Sri Ramanikvijayji, it has been printed in

Gujarati script in the second part of a commemoration volume (Pp. 50-51) released on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Sri Mahavira Jain Vidyalaya. The basis of this story is to be found in two earlier works entitled *Sumatinath Charitra* and *Jayananda Charitra*. *Jayananda Charitra* is a poetical work in Sanskrit in 9 cantos by Acharya Munisundara Suri of the Tapogaccha sect which in its turn has been taken from a Prakrit work entitled *Sumatinath Charitra* by Sri Somaprabhacharya who lived in the 12th century V. S. It is written therein that some Acharya while revealing the previous birth of a Vidyadhara had stated that in their previous lives, they (i. e., the Acharaya and the Vidyadhara) were Madana and Dhanadeva. This proves that the story is very old and was current even before the 12th century V. S

Lalitangakumar—The story finds a place in *Amamasvami Charitra* by Muniratna Suri (V. S. 1252).

Uttamkumar—The story has many versions, the first one being due to Jinakirti and the second one to Samamandana Gani. Both belonged to the last decade of the 15th century V. S Another version by Subhasila Gani is also available. In the 16th century V.S., Charuchandra reproduced it in 686 *slokas*. His language is lucid, but at places, he has included poems from elsewhere and also matters not strictly relevant. The story is also available in Sanskrit prose. Its great popularity is established by the fact that in 1884, Dr. Weber edited, translated and published it in German.

Seth Akalasa—Unlike the story of Madana and Dhanadeva, the present story is more religious and nearer-to-life in its content than being merely popular.

Bankachula—It is the fourth story in the *Kama-Kumbhadi Katha Sangraha*.

Ambika—Ambika was the guiding female deity during the spiritual regime of Arhat Aristanemi who was the 22nd Tirthankara of the Jainas. Hence she has figured at many places in the life-story of this Tirthankara. This has been noted by Acarya Hemachandra in his monumental work and also in several *Puranas* and epics. Several hymns are dedicated to her. In the Jaina tradition, this goddess occupies a very respectable place along with others, such as, Chakresvari and Padmavati.